

ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY • SERIES 1

# Aristotle and the Ontology of St. Bonaventure

**Franziska van Buren**



LEUVEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

ARISTOTLE AND THE ONTOLOGY OF ST. BONAVENTURE

ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

DE WULF-MANSION CENTRE  
Series I

LXIII

Editorial Coordinator

Russell Friedman

Editorial Board

Lisa Devriese  
Pieter d'Hoine  
Jan Opsomer  
Andrea Robiglio  
Carlos Steel  
Gerd Van Riel

Advisory Board

Brad Inwood, Yale University, USA  
Jill Kraye, The Warburg Institute, London, United Kingdom  
John Marenbon, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom  
Lodi Nauta, University of Groningen, The Netherlands  
Timothy Noone, The Catholic University of America, USA  
Robert Pasnau, University of Colorado at Boulder, USA  
Martin Pickavé, University of Toronto, Canada  
Pasquale Porro, Università di Torino, Italy  
Geert Roskam, KU Leuven, Belgium

The “De Wulf-Mansion Centre” is a research centre for Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy of the KU Leuven, Kardinaal Mercierplein, 2, B-3000 Leuven (Belgium). It hosts the international project “Aristoteles Latinus” and publishes the “Opera omnia” of Henry of Ghent and the “Opera Philosophica et Theologica” of Francis of Marchia.

ARISTOTLE AND THE ONTOLOGY  
OF ST. BONAVENTURE

Franziska van Buren

LEUVEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

This publication has received support from the KU Leuven Fund for Fair Open Access, and has been accomplished within the framework of the ERC project, PlatoViaAristotle (AdG 885273)



Published in 2023 by Leuven University Press / Presses Universitaires de Louvain / Universitaire Pers Leuven. Minderbroedersstraat 4, B-3000 Leuven (Belgium).

© Franziska van Buren, 2023

This book is published under a Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>



Attribution should include the following information:

Franziska van Buren, *Aristotle and the Ontology of St. Bonaventure*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2023. (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

ISBN 978 94 6270 356 8 (Hardcover)

ISBN 978 94 6166 488 4 (ePDF)

ISBN 978 94 6166 490 7 (ePUB)

<https://doi.org/10.11116/9789461664884>

D/2023/1869/8

NUR: 732

Cover: Geert de Koning

Typesetting: Crius Group



Λεῦσσε δ' ὄμωσ ἀπεόντα νόω παρεόντα βεβαίωσ.

—Parmenides



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	IX
<b>ABBREVIATIONS FOR EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS OF PRIMARY TEXTS</b>	XI
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	1
<b>CHAPTER 1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</b>	15
1. The Neoplatonic via Proclus: The One and the Many	16
2. The Problem of Neoplatonism in the Christian Tradition	24
3. Aristotle via Avicenna and the Early Franciscan Tradition, or What Exactly Is Aristotelianism?	36
<b>CHAPTER 2. THE THEORY OF FORMS IN THOMAS AQUINAS</b>	51
1. The Structure of Creation	53
2. Participation	57
3. Participation in the Fourth Way?	64
4. Participation in Exemplar Causes?	67
5. Conclusion	71
<b>CHAPTER 3. THE CONTROVERSY: BONAVENTURE AND ARISTOTLE</b>	73
1. History of Scholarship on Bonaventure	73
2. The “Anti-Aristotelianism” of the <i>Collationes</i>	81
<b>CHAPTER 4. AN ARISTOTELIAN ACCOUNT OF UNIVERSALS</b>	95
1. Form, <i>Esse</i> , Actuality, Goodness	96
2. Universal Forms and Seminal Reasons	107
3. Universals	119
4. Conclusion	130
<b>CHAPTER 5. FORMS AS CAUSED BY GOD</b>	133
1. God Beyond Being	134
2. Exemplar Causation	137
3. A Multiplicity of Ideas?	145
4. Conclusion	154
<b>CHAPTER 6. FORMS IN THE NATURAL WORLD</b>	157
1. Individuation	158
2. Light and the Question of a Plurality of Substantial Forms	165
3. Causation	176
4. Evil	183
5. Conclusion	191



<b>CONCLUSION</b>	193
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	199
Primary Sources	199
Secondary Sources	202
<b>INDEX</b>	209

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my thanks to a number of scholars to whom I am deeply indebted for their feedback and support during the process of completing the present book: Peter Adamson (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität), who directed the doctoral dissertation on which this book is based, for his guidance and his honest advice on my dissertation from the earliest stages until its completion; the members of my doctoral dissertation committee, John Marenbon (Cambridge University) and Lydia Schumacher (King's College, London), whose suggestions were important for the final shaping of the present book; Christopher Cullen (Fordham University), who provided me with my first opportunity to study the philosophy of Bonaventure while I was completing my undergraduate studies, and who also provided excellent comments on the book manuscript; Fabrizio Amerini (Università degli Studi di Parma), who reviewed the manuscript for Leuven University Press, for his careful assessment which was invaluable in my revision process; and Russell Friedman (KU Leuven), the series editor, for his feedback on drafts of the manuscript and for his care and attention to my book in its final stages.

The present book is a revised version of my doctoral dissertation, submitted to Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München in December 2020 and defended on 07 May 2021.

This publication has received support from the KU Leuven Fund for Fair Open Access and has been accomplished within the framework of the ERC project *PlatoViaAristotle* (AdG 885273).



## ABBREVIATIONS FOR FREQUENTLY CITED EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS OF PRIMARY TEXTS

### ALEXANDER OF HALES

SH = *Summa Halensis*. In *Doctoris irrefragabilis Alexandri de Hales Ordinis minorum Summa theologica*, 4 vols. Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1924-48.

### ARISTOTLE

Cat. = *Categories*. In *Categories. de Interpretatione. Prior Analytics*. Translated by Harold P. Cooke and Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938.

De An. = *On the Soul*. Translated by W.S. Hett. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957.

De Cael. = *On the Heavens*. Translated by W. K. C. Guthrie. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939.

De Int. = *On Interpretation*. In *Categories. On Interpretation. Prior Analytics*. Translated by Harold P. Cooke and Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938.

Meta. = *Metaphysics, Vols. I-II*. Translated by Hugh Tredennick and G. Cyril Armstrong. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933-1935.

Phys. = *Physics, Vols. I-II*. Translated by Philip H Wicksteed and Francis Macdonald Cornford. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934-1957.

Poet. = *Poetics*. Translated by Stephen Halliwell, W. Hamilton Fyfe, Doreen C. Innes, and W. Rhys Roberts. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Post. An. = *Posterior Analytics*. Translated by Hugh Tredennick and E. S. Forster. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960.

### AUGUSTINE

Civ. = *The City of God, Vols. 1-7*. Translated by George E. McCracken et al. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1957-2008.

Conf. = *Confessions, Vols. 1-2*. Translated by Carolyn J.-B. Hammond. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014-2016.

De Trin. = *On the Trinity*. Translated by Stephen McKenna. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Div. qu. = *De Diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribu*. In *S. Aurelii Augustini Opera Omnia: Patrologiae Latinae Elenchus*. Paris: Migne, 1844-1855.

In Gen. ad lit. = *De Genesi ad litteram*. In *Sancti Aureli Augustini De genesi ad litteram libri duodecim, eiusdem libri capitula, de genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber, locutionum in heptateuchum libri septem*. Vindobonae: F. Tempsky, 1894.  
 Tr. in Ioann. = *In evangelium Ioannis tractatus S. Aurelii Augustini Opera Omnia: Patrologiae Latinae*. Paris: Migne, 1844-1855.

### BOETHIUS

Comment. in Porphyr. = *In Porphyrius Commentariorum*. In *Opera Omnia Manlii Severini Boetii*. Paris: Migne, 1891.

### BONAVENTURE

Brevil. = *Breviloquium*. In *Sancti Bonaventurae Opera Omnia (Tomus V)*. Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi): Collegium Sancti Bonaventurae, 1891.

Hex. = *Collationes in Hexaemeron*. In *Sancti Bonaventurae Opera Omnia (Tomus V)*. Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi): Collegium Sancti Bonaventurae, 1891.

In Sent. I = *Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum: In Primum Librum Sententiarum*. In *Sancti Bonaventurae Opera Omnia (Tomus I)*. Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi): Collegium Sancti Bonaventurae, 1882-1883.

In Sent. II = *Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum: In Secundum Librum Sententiarum*. In *Sancti Bonaventurae Opera Omnia (Tomus II)*. Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi): Collegium Sancti Bonaventurae, 1885.

Itin. = *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*. Translated by Zachary Hayes. Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002.

Sc. Chr. = *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*. Translated by Zachary Hayes. Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1992.

### DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

DN = *Divine Names*. In *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*. Translated by Rev. John Parker. Oxford: James Parker and Co., 1897.

HH = *Heavenly Hierarchy*. In *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*. Translated by Rev. John Parker. Oxford: James Parker and Co., 1897.

MT = *Mystical Theology*. In *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*. Translated by Rev. John Parker. Oxford: James Parker and Co., 1897.

### DUNS SCOTUS

Ordinatio II = *Ordinatio*. In *Ioannis Duns Scoti Opera Omnia VII*. Civitas Vaticana: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1973.

### MARIUS VICTORINUS

De Gen. Verb. = *Liber de Generatione Verbi*. In *Patrologia Latina*. Paris: Migne, 1844.

**PLATO**

- Resp. = *Republic*. Translated by Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Soph. = *Sophist*. In *Theatetus. Sophist*. Translated by Harold North Fowler. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921.
- Tim. = *Timaeus*. In *Timaeus. Critias. Cleitophon. Menexenus. Epistles*. Translated by Robert Gregg Bury. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929.

**PLOTINUS**

- En. = *Enneads, Vols. 1-7*. Translated by A.H. Armstrong. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966-1988.

**PROCLUS**

- El. = *The Elements of Theology*. Translated by E. R. Dodds. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- In Parm. = *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*. Translated by Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.

**THOMAS AQUINAS**

- BDH = *An Exposition of the "On the Hebdomads of Boethius."* Translated by Janice L. Schultz and Edward A. Aynan. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001.
- DEE = *On Being and Essence*. Translated and edited by Armand Maurer. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1968.
- DPN = *De Principiis Naturae*. Edited by John J. Pauson. Fribourg-Louvain: Société Philosophique, 1950.
- In Meta. = *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Translated by John P. Rowan. Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1961.
- QDP = *On the Power of God: Quaestiones disputate de potentia dei*. Translated by the English Dominican Fathers. Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1952.
- SCG = *Summa Contra Gentiles (Book One: God)*. Translated by Anton C. Pegis, F.R.S.C. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005.
- ST I. q. 2 = *Summa Theologiae, Vol. 2*. Translated by Timothy McDermott, O.P. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- ST I. q. 44-48 = *Summa Theologiae, Vol. 8*. Translated by Thomas Gilby, O.P. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

**WILLIAM OF OCKHAM**

Ordinatio I = *Ordinatio*. In *Guillelmi de Ockham Opera Philosophica et Logica: Opera Theologica II: Distinctiones II-III*. Edidit Stephanus Brown, O.F.M. St. Bonaventure, NY: Insituti Franciscani Universitatis S. Bonaventurae, 1970.

Quod. = *Quodlibetal Questions: Volume 2*. Translated by Alfred. J. Freddoso. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

## INTRODUCTION

The claim “what we know is what exists” appears, at first glance, to be quite an obvious statement – we know dogs and horses and so it seems obvious that dogs and horses exist. However, upon further reflection, it rather seems that what is most properly the object of our knowledge is not these particular dogs and horses themselves, but something that is universal – what Plato called a “form,” i.e. what is expressed by the definitions of these sensible things, as opposed to the sensible things themselves. If I want to know what “Rye the horse” is, I need more primarily to know what “horse” is and what it means – a definition that is universally applicable to any horse, not only to Rye. However, these universals which are more properly the objects of our knowledge are nowhere to be found among particular things. Thus, if we want still to maintain that what we know (i.e. universal forms) is what exists, we must ask: What and where these forms are, if they are not counted among sensible things?

First of all, let us take a step back and look more closely at the problems that arise from the claim that these objects of knowledge (i.e. the forms) exist – most of which arise from the consideration of the relationship between the universal form and the sensible things of which we predicate the form as a definition, i.e. the problem of participation. If we look, first of all, to the relationship between one form and a plurality of sensible particulars, we come upon the issues which Plato originally found with his own theory of forms in the *Parmenides* – i.e. the third man and the sail problems. If a thinker, moreover, is working within a context where philosophy needs to be made compatible with Christian beliefs, we have another set of problems. Where do we locate the forms if not in the Neoplatonic hypostasis of the Intellect? How do we avoid mediation between God and the created order?

In the Middle Ages the difficult task of confronting the many questions concerning universals, our cognition of them, and their ontological status was approached head-on. It seems quite fair to say that the importance of these questions concerning universals was caused, at least in part, by the rediscovery of the texts of Aristotle – a thinker for whom this topic is indeed central. Accordingly, we find Aristotle’s thought, or some interpretation of Aristotle, at the basis of many of the key figures in the history of what has become known as the “problem of universals” in the Middle Ages – Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and even William of Ockham. Of course, this is not only true of the Western tradition, but also of thinkers of the Islamic world, such as Averroes and Avicenna, whose influence is felt in the West perhaps almost as much as that of Aristotle himself. Indeed, to a great extent, all of these figures who develop unique and innovative views of universal



forms can be characterized in one respect or another as engaging deeply with the works of Aristotle.

However, one figure whose name has not been included in such lists is Bonaventure of Bagnoreggio – understandably so. Bonaventure would seem *prima facie* not to be a source of innovation with respect to an ontology of forms insofar as he plainly seems not to be terribly interested in engaging with the thought of Aristotle and is quite skeptical of – even perhaps to the point of being hostile to – Aristotelianism. Or at least this is how he has been understood by scholarship in the last circa 150 years. Indeed, Bonaventure’s philosophy has long been considered to be precisely the Augustinian, or Neoplatonic, foil to the decidedly Aristotelian systems of other medieval thinkers, such as Thomas Aquinas. While Aquinas was enthusiastic about incorporating the newly discovered texts of Aristotle, Bonaventure has been portrayed as being wary of the “problematic” positions which the texts of Aristotle either seemed to imply or explicitly endorse.

The present book, however, demonstrates that this characterization of Bonaventure and his attitude towards Aristotle is incorrect. The Bonaventure that the reader will encounter in the coming chapters is one who, much like Aquinas, is highly enthusiastic about utilizing the philosophy of Aristotle to solve foundational problems in his ontology and his theory of forms. Or to put this more emphatically: a Bonaventure who views Aristotle as *the source* and *the authority* when it comes to these kinds of philosophical questions. That said, while Bonaventure does base his theory of universals on the philosophy of Aristotle, his reading of Aristotle is one that is quite unique – not only by medieval standards, but by the standards of contemporary scholarship on Aristotle as well. Thus, by engaging with Bonaventure’s appropriation of Aristotle we are simultaneously uncovering a new way of interpreting Aristotle himself.

Accordingly, this book has two goals. The first is to shed light on Bonaventure’s greatly understudied ontology and theory of forms, showing how his philosophical system is a satisfactory and coherent one, able to respond to many issues which “competing” medieval theories of forms often cannot – particularly insofar as Bonaventure himself anticipates many arguments which later Franciscans, such as Ockham, make against alternative theories of universals. The second goal is to put forth a new way of understanding what Aristotelianism means in the Middle Ages, particularly in the Franciscan tradition, and to establish that Bonaventure’s interpretation of Aristotle, much like Aquinas’, is a resource which should be mined for contemporary efforts in thinking about and reading Aristotle in himself.

This book proceeds in the following manner. Chapter 1 provides a historical background, discussing the philosophical context in which Bonaventure was developing his ideas, along with possible influences on Bonaventure. While I argue that it is Bonaventure’s appropriation of Aristotle’s basic ontology that is central to understanding Bonaventure’s thought, this does not exclude Bonaventure’s being

influenced also by other thinkers and schools of thought. Here, I outline, first of all, what aspects Bonaventure takes and rejects from the Augustinian and Neoplatonic traditions. Figures treated here include Proclus (whose thought is known to Bonaventure via the *Liber de Causis*), Augustine, and Dionysius the Areopagite. A second school of thought of vital importance here is the earlier Franciscans who certainly would have influenced Bonaventure's thought as well. In particular, we will pay attention to the use, not of Aristotle himself, but of Avicenna's interpretation of Aristotle, which was so influential on the generation of Franciscans before Bonaventure. While it has been made clear in recent scholarship that Avicenna was a formative influence on earlier Franciscan thought (which previously was considered simply to be a codification of standard Augustinian positions), I do not consider Bonaventure to be purely continuing the work of his forerunners. This is to say, while Bonaventure is certainly aware of many of the positions of Avicenna and is willing in certain places to incorporate them, nonetheless he views himself as working primarily with the texts of Aristotle – not with the texts of Avicenna – and is often critical of the interpretation of Aristotle found in Avicenna.

Indeed, in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Bonaventure shows himself to be well aware of alternative methods of reading Aristotle. Thus, I think it also is beneficial to the reader to examine another medieval thinker who is also influenced by Aristotle – and perhaps to a greater extent than Bonaventure, also by Avicenna. This thinker is, of course, Thomas Aquinas, to whom we will devote a second (brief) chapter. While Bonaventure certainly does not argue against Aquinas, he argues against interpretations of Aristotle and views of universals which are strikingly similar to those of Aquinas, thereby making Aquinas representative of a trend in interpreting Aristotle which Bonaventure engages with head-on. A discussion of such positions will help us greatly in understanding what precisely Bonaventure is arguing against and what he finds particularly worrying about alternative medieval readings of Aristotle. In Aquinas' thought, accordingly, we will discuss two key points to which Bonaventure would take objection: the first concerns God's causal efficacy with regard to the forms, and the second concerns the ontological status of the forms in themselves. The first issue is one which is not so explicitly spelled out by Bonaventure but is clearly one he has in mind: Aquinas designates God, in contrast to the Dionysian notion, as primarily a principle of being – along with a set of convertible terms, i.e. the transcendentals of Goodness, Beauty, etc. – which seems to eliminate an ontological grounding of the essences of sensible things in God.<sup>1</sup> This is to say, Aquinas' God is only able to cause (directly) *that* things are, i.e. the fact that they exist, but not *what* things are, i.e. not their essence per se. Despite the many attempts on the part of contemporary scholars (which I will discuss in

---

<sup>1</sup> As is shown in, for example, the well-known works: Louis-Bertrand Geiger, *La Participation Dans La Philosophie de S. Thomas d' Aquin*. (Paris: Vrin, 1942); Cornelio Fabro, *La Nozione Metafisica di Partecipazione Secondo S. Tommaso D'Aquino* (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1950).

depth) to attribute to Aquinas participation in God via essences, they never can get further than the claim that this is a secondary kind of participation, i.e. essences participate in God only insofar as they happen to *exist*.

The second issue arises from the fact that Aquinas is notably unclear on what forms are: Are they particular or universal – or, indeed, neither?<sup>2</sup> If particular (as seems more likely to be the case), a number of problems arise with regard to our ability to know universals – and these arguments we will see fully fleshed out by Bonaventure in chapter 4. Moreover, because Aquinas maintains that forms do not exist in themselves as universals external to the mind, his position, while presenting itself as a realism, is so easily attacked that it ends up constituting a nominalism or, at best, a conceptualism. Here, I seem to be implying that the loss of realism is a bad thing. What I rather wish to say is that while Aquinas does not himself seem inclined to endorse a nominalism, he does not succeed in avoiding this result. Thus, if we (along indeed with Bonaventure) want a defense of realism (and, granted, this is an “if”), Aquinas’ solution would be insufficient in that it neither grounds the universal forms in a first principle, nor even grounds their extra-mental existence in the natural world.

In this chapter on Aquinas, I would also like to highlight that Aquinas’ interpretation of Aristotle is just that: an interpretation, and not necessarily an accurate interpretation. Indeed, as we will see, Aquinas makes use of a variety of other sources, some decidedly non-Aristotelian, but outright Platonic. In fact, we will often see Aquinas retain an “Augustinian” or “Platonic” position which Bonaventure emphatically rejects.

Following our chapter on Aquinas, we then turn to four chapters devoted entirely to Bonaventure. The first, chapter 3, discusses the quite long history of scholarship on Bonaventure’s view of Aristotle, where I also address in detail the infamous “threefold blindness” of which Bonaventure *appears* to accuse Aristotle in the *Collationes (Hex.)*, and which has long been taken as evidence of Bonaventure’s skepticism towards Aristotelian philosophy. Here, contrary to standard scholarship, I show that the positions which Bonaventure arrives at in the *Collationes* are far from being “anti-Aristotelian” as they are often portrayed, particularly with regard to the question about the temporality of the act of creation. Indeed, in the *Commentary*, he explicitly considers Aristotle to be a neutral in this debate. This is to say, taking a position similar to Albert the Great, Bonaventure thinks that Aristotle’s arguments against a beginning to the world are made only in the context of physics, removed from the consideration of a transcendent first cause.

---

<sup>2</sup> There is a long bibliography of contemporary scholarship which debates the status of forms in Aquinas’ thought. For a summary of the state of scholarship and a general evaluation of the problem in Aquinas, see: Brian Leftow, “Aquinas on Attributes,” *Medieval Philosophy & Theology* 11, no. 1 (2003): 1–41.

Chapter 4 then turns to how Bonaventure utilizes Aristotle's texts to develop his understanding of universal forms, their ontological status as primary being, and to resolve the "problem of universals." What is particularly interesting here is that many of the objections which Ockham later makes either to a naive realism, or to a realism which more or less resembles that of Aquinas, are made by Bonaventure himself to object to realist positions other than his own. Also important is that while Bonaventure considers the universal forms alone to exist, he also posits a singular form, which has a contingent existence, dependent on its own composition in a particular creature. This schematic interestingly anticipates something of the relationship between the common nature and the individual form, as found in Duns Scotus, and also – interestingly – brings to mind the irradiated potency in Proclus' ontology (which we will examine in chapter 1).

Chapter 5 considers how Bonaventure synthesizes Aristotelian ontology with his Christian understanding of God and divine causality. I turn to the question of how God causes the forms, i.e. any questions pertaining to how God creates without mediation – key here being Bonaventure's doctrine of exemplar causation and how he can understand this doctrine as building upon the basic Aristotelian ontology which he has established with respect to created things.

In chapter 6 we then examine how Bonaventure utilizes Aristotle to resolve a set of remaining topics related to the role of universal forms as operative parts of sensible particulars. The first is the notion of individuation. Particularly interesting about this topic is that Bonaventure, like Duns Scotus, has open the possibility of choosing his notion of a "particularized/singular" form (or what Scotus would call the individual form) as an option for the cause of individuation. But he does not. Instead, Bonaventure chooses the actual coming together of both form and matter as his principle of individuation. Here, while Bonaventure's universal/particular form distinction anticipates Scotus, Bonaventure also anticipates a key worry with Scotus' individual form: namely, if an "individual form" is really a form, then the definition of it (e.g., Socrates' own peculiar humanity) would have to be included in the universal definition. This is clearly not the case, and therefore an "individual form" is not really a form at all. If the individual form then is not really a form, it is not prior to the particular composite but, rather, like the composite itself, is a result – not the cause – of individuation.

In this chapter, we will also address how sensible things are composed of forms and all of the further difficulties involved in explaining precisely the presence of forms in sensible things – naturally, our first topic here is the infamous doctrine of a plurality of substantial forms. I argue that Bonaventure does not maintain (as, e.g., Aquinas does) one sole form which is substantial, but that he does indeed designate a certain set of forms as substantial, which, on my reading, includes any form the definition of which is predicated of the subject. Important in this discussion is also the form of light – insofar as Bonaventure seems to imply that light is

a substantial form. While some scholars have argued that light is the substantial form only of celestial bodies and, on these grounds, denied a doctrine of plurality of substantial forms to Bonaventure, I argue that light is indeed a substantial form – but *only* in the sense that it is applied to all bodies, i.e. as the most general form of all sensible/corporeal things. I argue that light has two senses in Bonaventure’s thought, which have been overlooked (or conflated) in secondary scholarship: (1) the form of light taken to mean simply a most general form of anything which has a body and is thereby visible and (2) the form of light taken in the common way as light-giving. Only in the first sense is light a substantial form, while in the second sense it is accidental.

Here, we will also address the notion of causation among composite creatures – now taking forms under the consideration not of being definitions of things, but as being rules operative in nature. From this, I then submit Bonaventure’s account to the test of modern evolutionary biology and show that his account of forms and their operation in nature better coheres with the modern understanding of evolution than does the account given, e.g., by Aquinas. As a final point, I turn to the notion of how evil exists in composite creatures and show how Bonaventure, arguing against Augustine, provides an understanding of the ontological status of evil derived from Aristotle – using a combination of the *Metaphysics* and the *Poetics*.

For the remainder of this introduction, I will discuss a few more philosophical points in my reading of Bonaventure and his interpretation of Aristotle that will help us to see the broader sketch of the argument in the coming chapters. I would like first of all to highlight that what I consider the core of Bonaventure’s solution to the “problem of universals” is precisely that while he embraces what one might call a “Neoplatonic” notion of God “beyond-being” and his causal efficacy via exemplar causation, he – perhaps surprisingly – abandons a Platonic or Neoplatonic notion of form entirely. What do I mean by this? That, while not relinquishing the claim that forms exist, he relinquishes the notion that forms exist in one realm, either in a hypostasis or in God, and sensibles in another. Indeed, Bonaventure relinquishes Neoplatonism on this point in favor of another philosophical school: that of Aristotle. Here, I wish to say that Bonaventure is able to solve many of the problems which one finds with a Platonic account of forms, precisely by rejecting the most basic claim of Plato: that forms are transcendent or separate. Instead, he embraces the foundational ontological claim made by Aristotle: that forms are immanent and inseparable. The key point here is that Bonaventure reads Aristotle in a highly different way than other medieval Aristotelians do – and a way which at some times corresponds to certain contemporary readings of Aristotle, while at other times seems very foreign. Indeed, we should stress that while Bonaventure is not satisfied with the Neoplatonic/Platonic account of forms, he is likewise not satisfied with alternative ways in which Aristotle was used to explain forms.

To put this still another way, one could say that the basic view of Bonaventure's reading of Aristotle is that he considers Aristotle neither to be advocating that the forms exist in the manner of the Platonists, nor as particularized in sensible composites in the manner that Aquinas posits them, or in the manner of the prevailing contemporary reading of Aristotle which understands "form" primarily for Aristotle to mean *individual* form. Rather, Bonaventure considers that, for Aristotle, the only thing that *exists* are forms. The natural world, or the created order, is simply forms – with sensible things being constituted and "composed" by these forms – hence, there is no question of their being separate. Indeed, this keeps in harmony with the Platonic/Neoplatonic claim that forms exist, although taken in a slightly unexpected direction in claiming that they alone exist – and it is particularly unexpected that he attributes all this to Aristotle.

This, however, leaves open the question: if forms alone exist, then what are sensible things? As we will see, Bonaventure addresses this worry head-on. By positing something quite similar to the later formal distinction of Duns Scotus, Bonaventure is able to explain how forms exist both in themselves (being/*esse*) and as operative in sensible things (not being, but existence/*existere*) – again, finding the basis for this distinction in Aristotle.

Now, I have been discussing these points regarding Bonaventure and his view of Aristotle as if they are all highly un-controversial. Quite the opposite is the case. Indeed, my very first claim that Bonaventure's main contribution to an understanding of the ontological status of forms comes by way of his Aristotelianism is far from an established position – in fact, fifty years ago, it would have been considered almost heretical.<sup>3</sup> Yet, here I am claiming that understanding Bonaventure as an Aristotelian is the *key* to understanding his philosophical thought. While a more in-depth discussion of the history of secondary literature will be dealt with in chapter 3, here we should at least make a few preliminary comments about whether Bonaventure's thought should be characterized as Neoplatonic or Aristotelian.

While Bonaventure's notion of God is (not surprisingly) heavily shaped by the Christian philosophical tradition, it is no less shaped by Aristotle as well; his entire physics, his notions of act and potency, generation and corruption, time, and physical change is Aristotelian, and – most important here – his notion of forms, as I have emphasized. Indeed, if we accept my claim that Bonaventure's understanding

---

<sup>3</sup> In scholarship, this stronger position regarding Bonaventure's "Aristotelian" tendencies is maintained only by Fernand van Steenberghe, whose original claim was not well received in scholarship. For van Steenberghe's views, see: *Siger de Brabant d'après Ses Oeuvres Inédites*. 1 *Les Oeuvres Inédites* (Louvain: Louvain Éd. De L'inst. Supérieur De Philosophie, 1931); *The Philosophical Movement in the Thirteenth Century* (London: Nelson, 1956). For responses to van Steenberghe, see: Etienne Gilson, "Siger de Brabant d'après Ses Oeuvres Inédites," *Bulletin Thomiste* Tome VI (1940): 5–22; Patrick Robert, "St. Bonaventure, Defender of Christian Wisdom," *Franciscan Studies* III (March 1943): 159–179; Robert Roch, "The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure – A Controversy," *Franciscan Studies* 19 (1959): 209–226.

of forms and physical things is shaped by Aristotle, it is fair to say that his overarching ontological structure of creation and God is likewise heavily influenced by Aristotle – even when he is making use of his Neoplatonic sources. This is because of Bonaventure’s methodology in approaching philosophical inquiry, which is always to work upwards from physical things, to the forms, to God. Thereby, his use of Aristotle and Neoplatonism must come together as a coherent whole. Moreover, because Bonaventure’s ontology is emphatically Aristotelian, it is indeed Bonaventure’s Aristotelianism which must imply his Neoplatonism, not the other way around – as it has sometimes been viewed in scholarship, i.e. that Bonaventure makes us of Aristotle whenever Aristotle happens to fit into his Augustinian/Neoplatonic philosophy. This is why we see Bonaventure so often express sympathy towards Aristotle when it comes to questions of creation and incorporate Aristotle into questions concerning God and his creative act. Aristotelianism must at least leave open the possibility of a more Christian understanding of God in order for Bonaventure’s physics and understanding of forms to match up with his metaphysics and philosophy of God.

To make a point of contrast: while Aquinas certainly takes much from Neoplatonic thought, he is nevertheless generally accepted as being influenced also – or rather, primarily – by the thought of Aristotle. Why is not the same said of Bonaventure? This also makes us wonder why do we generally study Aquinas in philosophy courses, but not Bonaventure? In particular, if I claim that he has a good answer to these questions concerning the status of universal forms, why has no one noticed it? Someone with a good foundation in the history of philosophy would be sure to know some basics about Aquinas’ hylomorphism, but little about Bonaventure’s.

For the answers to these questions, we need not look back to the Middle Ages but only about 100 years in the past. When interest in scholastic philosophy began to grow in the late 1800s into the early 1900s, the key figure of interest was Aquinas. The issue with this, however, was the often dogmatic approach to the superiority of Aquinas’ thought. The task was to find ways not only of defending Aquinas, but even of interpreting Aquinas or synthesizing him with other thinkers, as we find among many Neothomists, in order to provide satisfactory responses to possible objections. This is, in a certain way, an odd phenomenon – and one which has become, to a great extent, a relic of the past. Nevertheless, these early scholars who first revived an interest in scholasticism left their mark on the ways in which we think about the history of philosophy.

Moreover, the early consensus was that Bonaventure was not an Aristotelian,<sup>4</sup> that he was quite adamantly anti-Aristotelian. While this position has certainly

---

<sup>4</sup> This view of Bonaventure was also very much tied to the characterization of Bonaventure’s student, John Peckham, as an anti-Aristotelian. The first of these earlier scholars is Franz Ehrle, whose categorization of medieval philosophers into Augustinian vs. Aristotelian, as well as the characterization of John Peckham as anti-Aristotelian occurred in 1889. See: Franz Ehrle, S.J., “Beiträge zur Geschichte

been moderated in more recent scholarship so that the general view now is that Bonaventure maintained a synthesis of Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism (more rightly called an Augustinianism), this is still not the reality of the situation. It is *still* a presupposition which, as this book will show, leads us to miss the innovation and philosophical rigor of Bonaventure's understanding of forms which hinges upon his *Aristotelianism* – not his Augustinianism or his Neoplatonism. It is moreover a facet of Bonaventure's philosophy which *was* recognized, albeit by only one person: Fernand van Steenberghen, who asserted plainly that if one looks at the *Commentary on the Sentences*, the main source used is Aristotle.<sup>5</sup> Van Steenberghen, however, never wrote a study of Bonaventure which would substantiate his claim.

To give an example of Bonaventure's use of Aristotle, we can turn to Bonaventure's response to the question of the eternity of the world in the *Collationes* – the text universally cited, even by those who maintain that there is some influence of Aristotle on Bonaventure, as signifying the key rift between the two. However, in the *Collationes*, Bonaventure makes clear that in attributing the view that the world is eternal to Aristotle, he is relying on the *interpretation* of Aristotle provided by the "Greek Doctors" and the Arabs, while he himself concludes only that "Aristotle's words seem to sound like this."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, in the *Commentary*, Bonaventure not only uses Aristotle but in fact cites Aristotle alone to substantiate his arguments *against* the eternity of the world. He then addresses what he thinks Aristotle's own understanding of the eternity of the world is. Here, as we mentioned earlier, Bonaventure takes a position common in the Middle Ages, held also by Albert the Great, which claimed that Aristotle maintained that the world was eternal only with reference to physical causes, e.g., the gods of *De Caelo*, not with reference to a

---

der mittelalterlichen Scholastik 11, Der Augustinismus und der Aristotelismus in der Scholastik gegen Ende des 13 Jahrhunderts," *Archiv für Literatur und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* 5 (1889): 603–63; and his "John Peckham über den Kampf des Augustinismus und Aristotelismus in der zweiten Hälfte des 13 Jhdts." in *Zeitschrift für katholischen Theologie* 13 (1889): 172–193. A later scholar, Theodore Crowley critically assesses these categories established by Ehrle, targeting the essays of Knowles, Callus, and Mandonnet as other examples of a simplistic Augustinian vs. Aristotelian understanding of the debates of the thirteenth century. See: Theodore Crowley, O.F.M., "John Peckham, O.F.M., Archbishop of Canterbury, Versus the New Aristotelianism," in *T. Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 33, no. 2 (1951): 242–255. See also: M.D. Knowles, "Some Aspects of the Career of Archbishop Peckham," *The English Historical Review* IVII (1942): 1–18, 178–201; Daniel Callus, O.P., *The Condemnation of St. Thomas at Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1946). See also: P. Mandonnet, O.P., "Siger de Brabant et l'averroïsme latin au XIII<sup>e</sup>me siecle," in *Les Philosophes Belges* vi–vii (Louvain: Institut supérieur de philosophie de l'université, 1908–11). Crowley nevertheless still does not consider Peckham to be in any sense an "Aristotelian."

<sup>5</sup> Van Steenberghen makes the claim first in his work *Siger de Brabant d'après ses oeuvres inédites* (Louvain: Editions de l'institut supérieur de philosophie, 1931–42). He then defends it from a series of objections in: Fernand van Steenberghen, *The Philosophical Movement in the Thirteenth Century* (Belfast: Nelson, 1955). For Gilson's review of van Steenberghen's *Siger de Brabant*, see: *Bulletin Thomiste* VI (Jan. 1940–Oct. 1942): 5–22.

<sup>6</sup> *Hex.* VI.4. "... as Aristotle seems to say, according to all of the Greek Doctors, as Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Damascus, Basil, and all of the Arabic commentators...."



transcendent cause, i.e. the God of the *Metaphysics*.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Bonaventure concludes that Aristotle is not in conflict with the Christian position.<sup>8</sup> However, no secondary scholarship on Bonaventure even makes mention of this discussion which follows the six arguments against the eternity of the world.

On the topic of Bonaventure's "critique" of Aristotle's eternal world, one must also think of John Peckham, the student of Bonaventure who argued against Aquinas, and supposedly against Aristotle, on this very point. However, Peckham – often portrayed as an even stronger opponent of Aristotelianism – nonetheless attributes the inspiration for his own understanding of form, developed in one of the few purely philosophical texts we have from his corpus, the *Summa de Esse et Essentia*, to Book VII of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.<sup>9</sup>

Another issue regarding Bonaventure's Aristotelianism, is that Bonaventure, unlike Aquinas, was a quasi-political figure. Bonaventure often did not have the same freedom in writing as someone like Aquinas, insofar as Aquinas' work would not have been presented publicly – as is the case with the *Collationes*. As van Steenberghe points out, the fact that Bonaventure had to make a certain political *figura* helps us to understand that, post-*Commentary on the Sentences*, Bonaventure often seems lukewarm towards Aristotle – anyone would look to distance oneself from Aristotle if the validity of the use of Aristotle were being brought into question by Church authorities. This point, however, is often forgotten.

With the above in mind, we can look to further examples in the *Collationes* of Bonaventure's supposed hostility towards Aristotle. It is often put forth in scholarship that in the *Collationes*, Bonaventure says that Aristotle did not maintain divine ideas, but Plato did (as Augustine tells us), and that Aristotle was wrong to have denied Plato's doctrine. Here, we can note, first of all, that the issue at hand in the *Collationes* seems to be the ideas of virtues in God<sup>10</sup> and God's ability to know his creation, not divine ideas – or universal forms – in general.<sup>11</sup> In the *Commentary on the Sentences*, however, where the discussion hinges more explicitly upon the

---

<sup>7</sup> For a summary of Albert's position, see: David Twetten, Steven Baldner, and Steven C. Snyder, "Albert's Physics," in *A Companion to Albert the Great* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 173–219.

<sup>8</sup> This will be discussed further in chapter 3.

<sup>9</sup> For more on Peckham's use of Aristotle in his metaphysics and epistemology, see my work: *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of John Peckham* (Marquette, WI: Marquette Univ. Press, 2022). Peckham also appears to have written a commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics*. See p. 74, n. 220 in the present volume.

<sup>10</sup> *Hex.* VI.6-7.

<sup>11</sup> *Hex.* VI.2-3. Essentially, the objection is that Aristotle does not himself have an account of exemplar causation, which is certainly fair to say. Nonetheless, the fact that Bonaventure mentions this is far from evidence of Bonaventure's condemnation of Aristotle's philosophy on the whole. The difference between the *Collationes* and the *Commentary* on this point seems only to be the kinder attitude towards Plato in the *Collationes* than in the *Commentary*, insofar as Bonaventure aligns the notion of ideas in God with Platonic forms – a loose connection, since Plato's forms are not in the mind of God, but in the mind of the Demiurge, something of which Bonaventure seems aware in the *Commentary* (we will discuss this further in chapter 6).

ontological status of universals, Bonaventure says something different: that Augustine tells us that Plato had something like divine ideas, and if he did, that is good. Nonetheless, Bonaventure proceeds in his arguments against Plato as if Plato did *not* have such a notion. He then says Aristotle critiqued Plato precisely for having separate forms and for not having explained how such forms could be caused by a first principle or how they could cause sensibles – and Bonaventure is quite clear that Aristotle was right to do just this. Similarly, scholarship considers Bonaventure to reprehend Aristotle’s implicit endorsement of the unity of intellect despite the fact that Bonaventure, in the *Collationes*, explicitly says that this is not a position maintained by Aristotle but only one which uses Aristotle (erroneously) for support. It is abundantly clear that Bonaventure is aware that his critique of the unity of the intellect is certainly not directed at Aristotle, but at Averroes.<sup>12</sup>

What now can we conclude from the above? First of all, the *Collationes* comments are far from evidence that Bonaventure was anti-Aristotelian, as scholarship has so long viewed them to be. Secondly, when they are coupled with the assessments of Aristotle presented in the *Commentary*, it is quite clear that on all three of the usually cited issues (unity of intellect, eternity of the world, and exemplar forms) on which Bonaventure has long been considered to be anti-Aristotelian, he either sees Aristotle as a neutral in these debates, or even sees his own positions as being supported to a great extent by Aristotle – and that Bonaventure, given the wider picture, is certainly endorsing Aristotelianism, albeit not the Aristotelianism of Averroes or of Avicenna.

Indeed, to come back to our main point, if we miss Bonaventure’s Aristotelianism, which is so prevalent in the *Commentary*, we essentially set ourselves up to miss most of the substance of Bonaventure’s thought. If we skim over his use of Aristotle, we end up giving a superficial treatment to much of his metaphysics and physics – and indeed the entirety of his notion of forms. Here, one could say that when it comes to scholarship on Bonaventure, the issue all along has been that many of the original and most influential interpretations of Bonaventure were set up by scholars who did not understand him as an Aristotelian. The reasons why – whether by the chance order at which papers were published and topics were investigated – are not altogether clear. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that Aquinas was undoubtedly the topic of interest first (and foremost), and so much of the scholarship on Bonaventure was conducted with an eye always to Aquinas – portraying Bonaventure either as a kind of rival of Aquinas or as a poetical, mystical comrade of Aquinas. On the one hand, if Aquinas and Bonaventure are adversaries, we are often presented with the narrative that if Aquinas is Aristotelian, Bonaventure must be the conservative, the defender of the traditional Augustinian sources. Yet, on the other hand, when the two are viewed as compatible, Bonaventure’s philosophy

---

<sup>12</sup> *Hex.* VI.4. “... attribuitur Aristoteli secundum Comentatorem.”

is essentially reduced to Aquinas', thereby rendering Bonaventure philosophically uninteresting insofar as all he has to offer is a more poetic, less comprehensible version of Aquinas' basic positions.<sup>13</sup>

While it is clear why I would wish to reject the position that Bonaventure is simply a less clear Aquinas, I also find the dichotomy which sets Aquinas and Bonaventure up as adversaries to be quite unhelpful – not only insofar as it leads us to miss Bonaventure's Aristotelianism, but also because Bonaventure ended up generally playing the antagonist to Aquinas' protagonist and thereby received the poorer reading. Quite to the contrary to such a dichotomy between the two, both were trying to solve very similar problems, and while they often differ in their responses, they also often come together. In a certain sense, while Bonaventure more explicitly maintains that the universals exist precisely qua universals, his notion of a particularized form is not very different from that in Aquinas. Or again, while Bonaventure is often thought to embrace Augustinian seminal reasons where Aquinas rejects them, as we will see, Bonaventure's notion of seminal reasons is so transformed and shaped by Aristotle that his ultimate position is not far from Aquinas. Moreover, because of this false dichotomy, while Aquinas' reading of Aristotle has been utilized by modern and contemporary scholars as an aid in reading Aristotle himself, Bonaventure's reading is yet an untapped resource.

Speaking now of secondary scholarship on Bonaventure, I seem to have yet another issue. This issue is that the reader, I am certain, will notice that the bulk of my references to secondary sources are from, at best, the 1980s, and the scholars I am arguing against are, for the most part, dead. To forestall the worry that I am doing this on purpose, it is necessary to state that there is very little contemporary scholarship on Bonaventure concerning his understanding of forms and of their causal efficacy. Indeed, I am not wrong in saying it is practically non-existent. While there is a contemporary interest in Bonaventure concerning epistemology (i.e. illumination) and his philosophy of God (although not on the question of how God causes forms), this does not bring much to bear on the issues that this book will be covering. This is not to say that no one has mentioned Bonaventure's forms in the last thirty years but that no one has done much more than reiterate, in passing, the standard position, i.e. that his forms are more or less Neoplatonic, without going much into the details. I avoid citing these works because it seems unfair to target

---

<sup>13</sup> A good example is the treatment of Bonaventure by Daniel Callus, who writes of Aquinas and Bonaventure in the following manner: while "St. Thomas has been characterized as the architect of one of the most perfect philosophical syntheses" Bonaventure is "one of the most lovable figures in the whole history of mediaeval thought." Daniel Callus, "The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure and of St. Thomas" in *New Blackfriars* Vol. 21, Issue 240 (March 1940), 151. A perhaps less damning treatment, but one which nonetheless attempts at finding a harmony between Aquinas and Bonaventure, is that of John Francis Quinn's *Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies) – a project which ultimately leaves one with the question: if Bonaventure is so similar to Aquinas, then why not simply read Aquinas?

an overview book on medieval philosophy as being overly simplistic, or for simply following a standard interpretation. Thus, I am targeting more emphatically the scholars who developed this “standard” interpretation, while bringing in whatever more contemporary debates on, e.g., illumination or philosophy of God, per their relevance.

To bring this introduction to a close, I would like to bring the reader’s attention to the motto I chose for this book, a line from Parmenides’ poem, which reads: “with the mind, look to things far as if they were near.” I found this line descriptive of my project in a number of senses. First of all, the obvious: to look to that which exists, that which we know, as if it were close to us – or to use our Platonic-Aristotelian language, to look at the forms and make them the object of our inquiry. And this is quite clearly what this book will do. Secondly, taken out of context, it describes generally what we are doing in any history of philosophy insofar as we are looking at thinkers who are temporally very distant to us as if they were “near.”

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it expresses how this book is best described as a study of the reception of ancient philosophy in the thought of Bonaventure, insofar as Bonaventure, too, makes the distant thought of the ancients into something which was very close at hand – which is, of course, particularly true of the thought of Aristotle. This is to say, in the philosophy of Bonaventure, I aim to study the reception of a fundamentally ancient Greek claim, one which we see at the roots of ancient thought, not only in Plato and Aristotle but also in Parmenides himself: that the object of knowledge is what exists. It is this claim which Bonaventure sees so clearly supported in Aristotle’s texts and which, as we will see, directs the entire project of Bonaventure’s philosophical thought.



## CHAPTER 1

# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the present chapter, my goals are to introduce some historical and philosophical themes which will be important to engage with when we turn our attention to Bonaventure himself in the coming chapters. First of all, I would like to present a discussion of the Neoplatonist Proclus, which will set up some foundational problems in thinking about the relationship between forms and sensible things (or better, universals and particulars) and presents Proclus' quite nuanced and indeed solid response to many of the problems which may result from such a relationship. Proclus serves first of all as a potential influence on Bonaventure's way of reading Aristotle (via the *Liber de Causis*, which Bonaventure seems to be aware is not written by Aristotle, but a Neoplatonic thinker), remembering here that Proclus himself is also very much influenced by Aristotle. Moreover, Proclus is an excellent point of comparison to Bonaventure's view of forms, which – while it does indeed bear many similarities to Proclus – also differs on one main issue: the transcendence of forms, a position which Proclus maintains but Bonaventure rejects.

We will then turn our attention to some broader issues in the Christian appropriation of Neoplatonic ontology. Here we come upon the difficult question of locating the universals in a hierarchy of being which now must also include a first principle that bears an immediate relationship to the sensible world. For Plato and the (pagan) Neoplatonists, there was a hierarchy of being which included the mix of being and becoming as found among sensible things, the realm of being where we find the immutable and transcendent forms, and finally a first principle which exceeds being and thereby is better named as the good or the One. Incorporating such an ontology into a Christian theology is difficult on two fronts: the first, that the Bible seems quite clearly to name God as “being” not as the good or the One “beyond-being”; and the second, that such an ontology is built upon a mediation (by way of the forms) between the first principle and the sensible world which is incompatible with Christian belief. Accordingly, we will examine those problems by looking, first of all, at how such an ontology is formulated by Plato and Plotinus, before turning our attention to the Christian attempts at resolving this problem, first in Augustine and Marius Victorinus and then in Dionysius the Areopagite, who will prove to be the most influential on Bonaventure's view of divine causation.

To bring this chapter to a close, we will also raise the question of the influence of the early Franciscans on Bonaventure, particularly on his reading of Aristotle. Here, we will (at least in a preliminary way) see that Bonaventure is going in quite a different direction than his earlier Franciscan counterparts when it comes to questions concerning his basic ontology and view of forms.

## 1. THE NEOPLATONIC VIA PROCLUS: THE ONE AND THE MANY

Important in this section will be the task of highlighting the distinction which Proclus makes between complete and incomplete substance – which is very similar to the distinction which Bonaventure makes between the universal considered in itself and the universal considered as part of the sensible composite, i.e. as a seminal reason. Indeed, the very language used by Proclus of complete and incomplete is mirrored by Bonaventure. It is, however, important to note that Bonaventure himself does not explicitly reference the *Liber de Causis* when he uses this language which very much reminds one of Proclus – nor is a discussion of incomplete and complete substance discussed at great length in the *Liber de Causis* itself. Nonetheless, the similarities are striking and so it is well worth discussing Proclus' account, even simply for a point of comparison.

In explaining this distinction between the complete and incomplete substance in Proclus, it is also important to note that we are highlighting a *very* nuanced point in Proclus' ontology – one which is often skimmed over in scholarship on Proclus. Generally, we find Proclus' account of the relationship between effect and cause described as a “three-tiered” hierarchy of participation, consisting of (1) a participant (i.e. effect) and a division within the universal cause into (2) participated and (3) unparticipated. Our discussion will reveal rather a four-tiered hierarchy in which we will divide the second term (i.e. the participated universal) into (a) participated as a one-in-the-many and (b) participated as a one-over-the-many, or simply as (a) incomplete and (b) complete.

However, in order to understand Proclus' distinctive concept of participation and of the relationship of the one to the many, we first should turn our attention to his concept of causation. Proclus writes in Proposition 35 of his *Elements of Theology* “every effect remains in its cause, proceeds from it, and reverts upon it.”<sup>14</sup> All effects proceed from their causes, as an effect is something distinct from its cause. The effect then “reverts” upon its cause inasmuch as the effect strives to attain the fuller perfection above itself, that perfection which the cause possesses; this is to say, the cause designates itself as the *telos* of the effect. Yet, in order for the effect to be able to aim towards that perfection above itself, it must “remain in” its cause. By this “remaining in” Proclus means that the effect must possess some similitude to its cause in order to direct itself back to it, i.e. something cannot aim at becoming that which is wholly other than itself (a kitten cannot aim at growing up to become a dog; rather, the kitten aims at growing up to be that which caused it, the form of cat, because a particular kitten is similar to cat-ness, not to dog-ness). Yet despite

---

<sup>14</sup> *El.* § 35. Indeed, one might say that this short phrase presents a summary of Proclus' understanding of the entire ordering of the cosmos inasmuch as all things are arranged hierarchically according to their status of effect in relation to cause, ultimately all being caused by the first cause of all, the good or the One.

this similarity to its cause, there is a dissimilarity between cause and effect, i.e. that “proceeding forth” of the effect from its cause. Between cause and effect, then, there is similarity and dissimilarity; yet on the part of the effect, there is an ever-present striving to become wholly similar to and to revert upon its cause. This similarity of effect to cause and the striving of the effect towards its cause constitute the effect’s participation in its cause.

So far, this account of participation and causation is not much different from what one would find in Plato and Plotinus. Yet Proclus continues on to posit two different “modes” for any cause: one by which the cause is participated in (i.e. the “participated”) and another by which the cause remains entirely transcendent (i.e. the “unparticipated”). Proclus then establishes a relationship between these two modes: “All that is unparticipated produces out of itself the participated; and all participated substances are linked by upward tension to existences not participated.”<sup>15</sup> As Proclus explains, for any series, or order of substances, participating in a common participated term, there must be a monad, i.e. the unparticipated, a single beginning to the order which can be that single beginning of the order precisely because it is untouched by the multiplicity of the order.<sup>16</sup> The unparticipated term “produces out of itself” the term which is able to be participated in by the participants, while the participated is linked back to the unparticipated term which itself remains untouched by the participants. Hence, we see that the monad, i.e. the unparticipated, does not directly cause the participants – if it did, it would be participated in. Instead, as we shall see more clearly further along, it is the participated term in its mediating role which transfers the causal efficacy of the monad to the series of participants. Indeed, the monad itself does not have any relationship of participation with the participants, whether that be as a one-over-the-many or as a one-in-the-many. In itself, as the most primary unifier of the series, the monad is entirely untouched by the series of participants.

Inasmuch as the monad is one and unified and completely transcending both the participated and the participants, it has a few options, so to speak. The first is that it “remain fixed in sterility and isolation.”<sup>17</sup> Yet the result of this is that it “so must lack a place of honour,”<sup>18</sup> i.e. it would be imperfect. Proclus’ reason for saying this is based on his understanding of the good as being productive.<sup>19</sup> All things which are perfect unities desire to produce something from themselves, inasmuch as they participate in the good which is productive of all: “[T]he principles consequent

---

<sup>15</sup> *El.* § 23.

<sup>16</sup> *El.* § 21. It is important to note that this understanding of causation involving an unparticipated monad and a participated term applies not only to the forms but also to any causal principle.

<sup>17</sup> *El.* § 21.

<sup>18</sup> *El.* § 21.

<sup>19</sup> *El.* § 25.



upon [the good] are impelled because of their own proper completeness to generate further principles....”<sup>20</sup>

The second option for the monad much more properly fits its “honourable status”: “[T]he monad] will give something of itself, whereof the receiver becomes a participant, whilst the given attains substantial existence as a participated term.”<sup>21</sup> This is to say, the monad gives something to the participant – yet what it gives is not itself; rather what the monad gives is the participated term. The participated term, which itself has been brought about by the unparticipated, is secondary, δεύτερον, to the monad. The participated term then mediates between the monad and the participants – the substantial existence of the participated term being precisely what is participated in.

While then the monad is not itself participated in, via the mediation of the participated term, it nonetheless “is equally present [to all] and has filled [all the participants] out of its own being.”<sup>22</sup> Here, Proclus is saying that the monad is both untouched by the participants, yet present in them all – a seemingly contradictory statement. Yet, for Proclus, it is precisely because the monad is entirely transcendent and untouched by the participants that it is able to be present to all and to fill all with being. To put this another way, inasmuch as the monad itself is not dispersed throughout the many, as the participated term is, it can be wholly present to every member of the series – in order for it to be in all, it must be in none. For, as Proclus writes, “[T]hat which is present to all alike, that it may illuminate all, is not in any but prior to all.”<sup>23</sup>

Proclus explains how the radical priority of the monad is necessary in order for it to be present to all by considering three possible relationships that the monad could have to its participants: (1) it is in all, (2) it is in one out of all (i.e. in one member of the series but not in any other), (3) it is common to all but prior to all (i.e. unparticipated). By the first option, Proclus means that the monad is shared by the many (i.e. participated in), and indeed this first option resembles very much the understanding of the relationship between the forms and sensibles as sketched out, and objected to, in the sail problem of Plato’s *Parmenides*; one form which is shared by many (i.e. one uniting a series of participants), and in this sense *in* the many, and thereby itself made into many. Proclus knows very well to dismiss this first option for: “[A] principle which was in all (ἐν πᾶσιν) would be divided amongst all, and would itself require a further principle to unify the divided.”<sup>24</sup> To explain the sense in which the monad would require a further principle, we are not thinking about the monad as if it were some sensible object able to be cut into pieces and

---

<sup>20</sup> *El.* § 21.

<sup>21</sup> *El.* § 21.

<sup>22</sup> *El.* § 21.

<sup>23</sup> *El.* § 21.

<sup>24</sup> *El.* § 21.

divided among the participants, like pieces of a cake; rather, the sense in which it would be divided would be as in a series of participants, e.g., cats, all of which would share in the monad, cat, by being cats. The monad in this way would be able to unite the series of participants, cats, but not be able to unite the series which contains itself and all the cats. It would need a further principle: in this case, a third cat. This indeed would be the schematic which would result from our positing only the participants and a participated term – leaving out the unparticipated monad.

The second option, by which the monad would be present to only one out of all, solves the problem of positing a one over a series only insofar as it eliminates the series (because it is in only one, the monad doesn't stand over a many) – but to eliminate the series is clearly no solution at all since it is the series which we are trying to explain. We are left, then, with the third option which Proclus has already been arguing in favor of: that the monad is present to all precisely by being prior to all, i.e. not participated in by one or by all so that it may be present to all. However, the reason that the monad can be in this way both above all and present to all is that it generates out of itself its own participated term which mediates the relationship between itself (i.e. the monad) and the many. The monad in this way stands above the entire series, unifying, as cause, what is found in the many, while its own existence remains untouched by the many. Here, to resolve the issue of the one and the many, Proclus posits the one so far above the many that, not participated in by any, it can through its generation of the participated term yet be present to all.<sup>25</sup> It is Proclus' positing of such an entirely transcendent monad above each series that allows all the members of the series to be unified, to be caused ultimately by the one single monad, while avoiding the necessity of a "third man," insofar as the monad produces of itself the mediating term.<sup>26</sup>

Let us look briefly at the form of Eternity as an example better to see the relationship between these three terms (the unparticipated, the participated, and the participant). Proclus writes: "[I]t is plain that an eternal thing is distinct from its eternity, and both of these from Eternity in itself, the first being a participant, the second the participated, and the third unparticipated...."<sup>27</sup> The participated eternity "exists only in those members which participate in it" – but "prior to these [is] the undivided Eternity ... the Eternity of eternities since [it generates] the participated

---

<sup>25</sup> Eric Perl shows a similar account in the thought of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, where Dionysius attributes such complete transcendence to God. Of Dionysius' God, Perl writes: "The more transcendent God is, the more – not the less! – intimately present He is to the world; the absolutely transcendent God of Neoplatonism is therefore nothing but what is manifest in and as all things...." Eric D. Perl, *Theophany* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2007), 112.

<sup>26</sup> Proclus' explicit response to the third man argument as it found in Plato's *Parmenides* is a more complicated issue – and one which is not necessary to examine at a depth here. For more on Proclus' precise response to the problem of the third man in the *Parmenides*, see: Lloyd Gerson, "Proclus and the Third Man," *Études Platoniciennes* 9 (2012): 105–18.

<sup>27</sup> *El.* § 53.

terms,” and while itself transcending all, “is identically present everywhere and in all members of its order.”<sup>28</sup> Venus and Mars are eternal, i.e. both participate in eternity; Venus’ eternity, i.e. that eternity in Venus, is distinct from Venus, as Mars’ eternity is distinct from Mars. Moreover, both Venus’ eternity and Mars’ eternity are distinct from Eternity itself, for the former are participated eternities (i.e. participated in by Venus and Mars), and the latter is not. Even our ordinary language reflects this: we never say “Venus is Eternity” (for Eternity here would indicate the unparticipated term), but we do say “Venus is eternal,” a phrase in which the subject indicates the participant and the predicate nominative indicates the participated.

It is important to note that, on Proclus’ account, each monad which causes a series of participants is only a *relative* monad, i.e. no monad is the One itself which alone is One-ness itself, the supreme monad.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, it could be that what is the monad in one series is actually produced by a higher monad in another series. We can see this in the relationship between the forms and the Intellect. Any particular form is a monad, and thus has an unparticipated and participated term, such as we saw with Eternity. Yet, each particular form is itself produced by the monad, the Intellect, which is the unity of the forms and from itself produces the forms which, relative to the Intellect, are the participated terms (i.e. insofar as they are participated in by the sensibles),<sup>30</sup> but in themselves are the unparticipated monads for another series.

This account of the relationship between the monad and the series which I have outlined is yet only a most basic sketch. What I have stressed thus far is that Proclus uses the concept of the monad and the participated term to provide a more coherent solution to the question of how the one relates to the many. Now, however, I would like to look more carefully at how the monad creates a further “closeness,” both between itself and the participants and between the participated term and the participants. Proclus further refines and clarifies the relationship of the monad to the series of participants by giving a more detailed account of how the monad causes the members of the series by producing out of itself the participated term. Proclus writes: “[E]very original monad gives rise to two series, one consisting of substances complete in themselves, and one of irradiations which have their sub-

---

<sup>28</sup> *El.* § 53.

<sup>29</sup> *El.* § 23.

<sup>30</sup> One can certainly also say that the forms are participants in the Intellect, insofar as the unparticipated Intellect would generate of itself the participated term of Intellect in which the forms would participate. In the above passage, I have broken it down into less detail: Intellect (unparticipated), forms (participated), sensibles (participants). The entire set of causal principles in the ontological hierarchy could be broken down into the unparticipated-participated-participant schematic in a number of ways. For example, the One could be called the unparticipated, the Intellect the participated, and the sensibles the participants; the (hypercosmic) Intellect could be called the unparticipated, the (cosmic) Intellect the participated, and the cosmos the participant, etc. Proclus’ account of causation gives us not a static understanding of the hierarchy of being, but rather generates innumerable ways for us to conceive of this hierarchy.

stantiality in something other than themselves.”<sup>31</sup> From the single monad comes a series of “complete substances” and another of irradiations which Proclus calls “incomplete substances.” What Proclus intends is that the participated term can be considered either as being *in* the participant (i.e. incomplete) or as being *above* the participant (i.e. complete) – although due to its “discrimination into a manifold”<sup>32</sup> (i.e. its being participated in), even when we think of it as being above the participant, it cannot be above in the absolute sense in which the monad itself transcends the participants. The incomplete substances are those irradiations which exist *in* the participant, and, insofar as they exist in the participant, they are dependent upon the participant. Proclus writes that the incomplete substances “are upon such a level that they belong to their participants: for being incomplete, they require a substrate [i.e. participant] for their existence.”<sup>33</sup> The complete substances, on the other hand, are participated in, yet remain “above” and independent from the participant. Instead of depending upon the participant for their existence, they rather “make the participants belong to them: for being complete they fill the participants with themselves, and their substantial existence.”<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, when Proclus says that the complete substances fill the participants with themselves, he does not intend that the complete substances mediate between the monad and the incomplete substances, but rather that the participated term considered as a complete substance is responsible, as he so clearly states, for the existence of the participant (certainly, the complete substances mediate between the monad and the participant but not between the monad and the incomplete substance). Proclus here is careful to make clear that both the complete and the incomplete substances are generated immediately by the monad and thus are identical with reference to their intelligible content, despite the fact that one is complete and the other incomplete. The monad, by generating from itself the participated term in this twofold manner, creates both the one-over-the-many (i.e. the complete substance) and the one-in-the-many<sup>35</sup> (i.e. the incomplete substance).

Here, then, we can see quite clearly that there is no mediation implied between the complete and incomplete substance; rather, the complete and incomplete are compared to each other as the perfect to the imperfect – the same substance (i.e. the participated term), but possessing different grades of being. While there is an ontological distinction between the two (i.e. that of perfect to imperfect), substan-

---

<sup>31</sup> *El.* § 64.

<sup>32</sup> *El.* § 64.

<sup>33</sup> *El.* § 64.

<sup>34</sup> *El.* § 64.

<sup>35</sup> Clearly the incomplete substance is not a one in the many in the way in which a transcendent universal form can be said to be “in” the many, as mentioned earlier. Rather, the incomplete substance is “one in the many” in the sense of being one (i.e. one form) in each member of the series and dependent on the members of the series. The incomplete substance, then, is more properly “in” the many, while we say of the complete substance that it is “in” only in the sense that things partake of it.

tially they are the same since both have their existence in the monad. For indeed, when we ask what something is, we ask what its substance is; this is to say, when we ask, to use a sensible thing for an example, “What is that tree?” we respond with the name of a complete substance, “Tree,” even though it is the incomplete substance which exists in the tree. The complete substance is substantially the same as the incomplete except that while the complete substance remains independent from the participant, the incomplete is present in and thus wholly dependent upon the participant. The form of tree which exists in the particular tree (i.e. the incomplete substance), which gives the particular tree its intelligibility and directs it to grow and exist as a tree, is drifting farther away from the unity and perfection of the monad, insofar as it exists in one of the series of the participants. The form of tree as it exists in the particular tree in this sense is only an irradiation, an incomplete substance, effectively an appearing of the monad in the natural world, yet no less immediately arising from the monad than the complete substance, but arising less perfectly.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, if we recall the two different types of knowledge, the knowledge possessed by the gods which grasps the forms in perfect unity and the knowledge possessed by human souls which grasps the forms as a multiplicity, we see a correlation with these two different substances. The object of knowledge, the substance, is not different for gods and for the souls of humans, but it is understood differently. For the gods it is understood as unity, as complete substance. Yet, for us, it is understood as multiplicity, as incomplete substances (i.e. irradiations) which we see within the sensible participants. However, both complete and incomplete substances are nothing more than the communication to the series of participants of the causal efficacy of the monad, as the monad expresses itself through greater or lesser perfection.

Now let us look still more closely at how the unparticipated term generates the participated term (both as incomplete and the complete substance) and how the participated term is participated in by the participant. Here, in particular, we want to see exactly how Proclus explains the mediating role of the participated – that is, how the monad’s causal efficacy is communicated to the participant without the monad itself being participated in. Every cause transcends its effects (i.e. is ontologically prior) and so the participated (as the complete substance) cannot itself be fully immanent in its effect, for if it were, it would be dependent upon its effect for its own existence.<sup>37</sup> Because the participated term (i.e. as the complete substance) is cause of the participant, it must remain separate from the participant (i.e. ontologically prior). Yet, in order for it to be “participated in” there must be a “mean

---

<sup>36</sup> The complete substance, of course, is only relatively perfect. It is perfect in the sense that it is complete and not lacking in anything per the kind of thing it is, but it is not perfect in the absolute sense that the monad is. The same, indeed, is true of the monad when compared to the First Principle. These complete substances and the monads, being perfect, are also divine, while the incomplete substances, lacking in perfection, are not.

<sup>37</sup> *El.* § 75.

term to connect the [participant and the participated terms], one which more nearly resembles the participated principle than the participant does, and yet actually resides in the latter.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, the participated term is present to the participant not by itself being fully *in* it, as we have seen, but retaining its separateness (i.e. as the complete substance). Yet, it “is present to the participant through an inseparable potency (*δυνάμις*) which it implants”<sup>39</sup> – this potency Proclus identifies with the irradiation/incomplete substance and is that which allows the participant to revert upon its cause.<sup>40</sup> In this way, we see that while the complete substance, i.e. the participated term as independent from the participant, is not causally responsible for the existence of the incomplete substance (irradiation) in the participant, it is responsible for transferring the irradiation from the monad into the participant. Indeed this is to say, retaining the close connection between the unparticipated and the participants, that the entire causal power of the complete substance consists in communicating the causal power of the *unparticipated* term, i.e. in “implanting” the incomplete substance as that potency in the participant to revert upon its cause. Thus, this potency which proceeds to reside in the participant is the very presence of the cause (the monad) to its effect; in this way, it is yet the monad itself which guides and directs the sensible by giving its *telos* and its very existence as whatever it is.<sup>41</sup>

To bring this section to a close, I would like to bring out two points of interest from our discussion of Proclus. The first concerns the relationship between the unparticipated form and the participated form, both as incomplete and as complete substance. Bonaventure, in a manner quite similar to Proclus, will conceive of the form as having two modes: one complete and the other incomplete, one actual and the other potential, one independent of and one dependent on the sensible particular.<sup>42</sup> In this sense, Proclus has been an ideal figure to look to if our purpose is ultimately to explain Bonaventure. Moreover, for Proclus, the distinctions between the unparticipated and participated forms, as well as between the complete and incomplete substances themselves, are real distinctions. Bonaventure, however, will conceive of the relationships in this schematic quite differently, and he does so precisely to avoid what Proclus is making such an effort to retain: separate forms. Yet, for a fuller account of Bonaventure’s alternative we will have to wait.

---

<sup>38</sup> *El.* § 75.

<sup>39</sup> *El.* § 81.

<sup>40</sup> *El.* § 81.

<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Proclus’ account of form includes the three causes which Aristotle also attributes to form in the *Metaphysics*: final, formal, and first efficient (i.e. the cause of generation). See *Meta.* VII.7 1032b1-3 and *Meta.* IX.8 1050a3-11.

<sup>42</sup> However, Bonaventure does not posit an “unparticipated” form which stands above the complete and incomplete substances. For Bonaventure’s use of complete and incomplete language, see his discussion of seminal reasons as “incomplete being” (*esse incompletum*) and how they are ordered to “complete being” (*esse completum*), *In Sent.* II, d. 8, a. 1, q. 3, pp. 4442b-443a.

My second point is that we see in Proclus a shift in the way of thinking about participation. In Proclus' ontology, participation is not simply a matter of explaining what things are, as it was for Plotinus and Plato. Rather, for Proclus, as it will be taken up by Dionysius and then later thinkers, including of course Bonaventure, there is now a new stress on the task of explaining precisely the "revelatory" presence of the forms in the sensible world. With this shift in thinking about the relationship between the sensible world and the causal principles above it, we can see in Proclus the origins of many of the more overarching views of causation, particularly divine causation, developed by later Christian thinkers – especially as we find it in Dionysius the Areopagite.

## 2. THE PROBLEM OF NEOPLATONISM IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Our next topic, now turning in the direction of examining a general ontology rather than the specifics of causal relations between universals and particulars, is to discuss how Christian thinkers before Bonaventure approached the problem of establishing the ontological status of universals in relation to a Christian God – or, put in another way, how they answered the question of what is being. Indeed, as God is himself supposed to be being – as he communicates quite clearly in the Biblical statement "I am that I am" – it seems impossible for a Christian thinker to attribute the role of "being" to forms instead of to God himself. *Prima facie* what any Christian thinker must do is simply to name God "being" and abandon this claim that it is rather the forms which are being and have an existence apart from sensibles – or worse that they bear an ontological status which stands in between God and sensibles. Moreover, this includes abandoning the emphatic claim in Neoplatonic thought that whatever the First Principle is, it is not only unknowable, it is also not "being" – or, put more precisely, it is "beyond being."

However, rejecting the Neoplatonic God beyond-being in favor of the Christian God of being is not without its own problems. If one maintains the position that Scripture names God as being in a literal sense (as does, for example, Aquinas),<sup>43</sup> two potentially problematic positions result: (1) because God is (i.e. is being) and cannot himself merely be one of the forms, the forms cannot themselves be equated with being as they were for the (pagan) Neoplatonists, such as Proclus; and (2) because God is being, his causal efficacy is restricted solely to the *being* of his creation; i.e. if

---

<sup>43</sup> We will discuss Aquinas' distinction between essence and existence in the next chapter. I use Aquinas for my example above because he appears to posit a real distinction between essence and existence. Although medieval scholastics considered many of the Arabic thinkers also to maintain a real distinction, their position has been questioned in contemporary scholarship. See: Fedor Benevich, "The Essence-Existence Distinction: Four Elements of the Post-Avicennian Metaphysical Dispute (11–13th Centuries)," *Oriens: Zeitschrift der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Orientforschung* 45, No. 3–4 (2017): 203–258.

God is a principle of being (and clearly not a Neoplatonic form), there is no participation in God directly through *what* things are (i.e. their essences), but only *that* things are (i.e. through their being), as we mentioned also in the introduction.<sup>44</sup> For the pagan Neoplatonists, however, among sensible things, participation pertains both to *what* things are and *that* they are, because there is not one principle of being which is participated in, but many, i.e. the multitude of forms, which are finite essences and the causes both of being and of intelligibility in the sensible realm. The first principle, namely, the good or the One, inasmuch as it is the cause of the finite being of the forms must then be beyond being (as a cause must be greater than its effects). Here, we can see that the Neoplatonic God beyond-being is what guarantees the twofold participation, both in being and in essence – because God *is not*, the forms *can be*, and thus can function as the causes of both being and intelligibility. It seems, then, that Christian Scripture is irreconcilable on this front with Neoplatonism. How can the Christian Neoplatonists, reading Scripture which seems to imply a God of being, still maintain a Neoplatonic participation where sensible things are revelatory of the causes above them both via being and via their essence – particularly inasmuch as this position depends on a God who is *not being*?

Let us take a step back and first look at the relationship between God and being in the “pagan” philosophers, Plato and Plotinus. The understanding of a God which is beyond being is found first of all in Plato. For Plato, that which is intelligible (τὸ νοητόν) is that which is being (τὸ ὄν). This is shown clearly in the *Timaeus*, where Plato posits a distinction between things which are becoming (τὸ γιγνόμενον) and that which exists (τὸ ὄν).<sup>45</sup> *Timaeus* asks which of these two are intelligible, and the answer is clearly τὸ ὄν, that which is “uniformly existent.”<sup>46</sup> For Plato, there are many forms, all of which are “uniformly existent” and thereby intelligible, yet which are distinct from one another. Being, then, is a multiplicity; being is not simple, but rather differentiated among the forms. We see this theme of differentiation among the forms again in the *Sophist*, where Plato stresses the necessity of “otherness” (ἕτερος)<sup>47</sup> to be participated in by all forms: “And we shall say that [Other] permeates them all (i.e. being, or the forms); for each of them is other (ἕτερον εἶναι) than the rest, not by reason of its own nature, but because it participates (μετέχειν) of the idea of the Other (ιδέα α τῆς θατέρου).”<sup>48</sup> The forms, by virtue of their participation in their

---

<sup>44</sup> This is of course a complex issue, particularly with regard to the thought of Aquinas – about which there has been much scholarly debate. However, on all sides of the issue, the most that one can have with Aquinas’ God qua being is a secondary participation through the essences of creatures, while the primary participation is through being. We will discuss this in detail in chapter 2.

<sup>45</sup> *Tim.* 27d.

<sup>46</sup> *Tim.* 28a.

<sup>47</sup> *Soph.* 255c.

<sup>48</sup> *Soph.* 255e. Translation edited. Translation originally said “partakes” for μετέχειν, but Plato clearly means participates and that is how μετέχειν is usually translated; “partakes” is misleading and inconsistent within this and other translations. I’ve also capitalized Other in certain places to



fellow form, Other, are thus differentiated from each other, forming a multiplicity of being,<sup>49</sup> not a simplicity, such as Parmenides would have it.<sup>50</sup>

Plotinus likewise makes clear that everything which is in a primary sense, i.e. the forms, is a specific thing – finite and “defined” and thus intelligible.<sup>51</sup> The forms, as multiple (πολύς) distinct beings,<sup>52</sup> compose a single “realm,” i.e. the Realm of the Forms or the hypostasis of the Intellect. The forms, then, are as if many princes, all of which share in a common family tree.

However, if there are many princes, who reigns over them all, over the entire Realm of the Forms and being, as king? For Plato, the answer is the good, as the font and source of being and intelligibility, which stands beyond the Realm of the Forms, where being is possessed and shared by all. Plato describes the Realm of the Forms as the “offspring of the good which the good produced in proportion to itself.”<sup>53</sup> Whatever perfection exists among the forms, the good, which causes the perfection of the forms, is itself beyond it: “[I]f you think of the good as something even more beautiful than [knowledge and truth], you will think about it in the right way”<sup>54</sup> – here, we see in Plato the maxim that a cause must always be greater than its effects. Since Plato equates the intelligible (τὸ νοητόν) with being (τὸ ὄν),<sup>55</sup> he continues on to say that “being and reality is in [knowledge and truth] because of [the good], although the good is not being, but reaches even farther beyond it in rank and power.”<sup>56</sup> Whatever is a possible object of the intellect among the forms, the good is beyond it. The intelligible (i.e. that which is) may only be thought of as “good-like (ἀγαθοειδῆ)” but is not itself the good.<sup>57</sup> Again, he writes, “the state of the good should be valued much more highly” for it “gives us understanding and truth, yet it is beyond these in beauty.”<sup>58</sup> The good alone is ἀμήχανον κάλλος.<sup>59</sup>

---

differentiate between when Plato is mentioning the form of Other or the participated “other” of each form (i.e. each form is other than the rest because it participates in Other).

<sup>49</sup> The forms, however, are not entirely distinct from one another, creating separate spheres of being with no interaction with one another. Rather, the forms relate to one another in a complex, differentiated “unity” of being. Plato calls this complex unity an “interweaving of the forms with one another (ἀλλήλων τῶν ἰδῶν συμπλοκήν).” Plato, *Sophist* 259e.

<sup>50</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between Plato and Parmenides concerning thinking about being, see: Eric D. Perl, *Theophany* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2007), 17–34.

<sup>51</sup> *En.* V.I.5.8–9.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Resp.* 508b.

<sup>54</sup> *Resp.* 509a.

<sup>55</sup> *Tim.* 27d.

<sup>56</sup> *Resp.* 509a.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* Plato’s use here of the word ἀμήχανον is very interesting because in addition to meaning something which is extraordinary, i.e. extraordinary in the sense that it itself surpasses reality, it is often used to refer to something which is impossible or unmanageable, i.e. extraordinary in the sense that it is utterly beyond *our* capabilities; the good is utterly beyond what we can accomplish. This indeed recalls Proclus’ assertion that the attainment of the principles above us is beyond our power, i.e. “impossible” or “unmanageable.”

Plotinus maintains a similar causal relationship between the good and its effects, yet explains this relationship with reference to number and unity – a notion not found as such in Plato. Multiplicity, i.e. number, is found among being, yet, as Plotinus writes, “number is not primary.”<sup>60</sup> There must be something which is more primary than being and number, something which is the cause of number, i.e. of the multiplicity in being. This something is the One or the good, the “simple God (ὁ ἀπλοῦς) who is prior to multiplicity, the cause of [the Intellect’s] existence and multiplicity, the maker of number.”<sup>61</sup> This simple God, the One, must be beyond and without being in order for it to be the cause and origin of being in something else – for a cause must always be greater than the effect. In this sense, God is nothing – God *is not*, and accordingly is *no thing*. Yet, the One gives oneness to all beneath it, and thus acts as the “definer” of all, imparting to beings the determinations which allow them to be, to exist as this or that – while the One itself is no thing. All being is dependent upon, derived from, and determined by the One, and accordingly it is impossible for being to be first, to be primary.

Scholars, however, have attempted to conceive of Plotinus’ One not as non-being, but as infinite being relative to the finite being of the forms.<sup>62</sup> Such a position, however, would be absurd for a Neoplatonist. For the very concept of “infinite being” violates that basic proposition of Neoplatonism, rooted in Plato himself, that to be is to be intelligible and to be finite. Moreover, insofar as the forms are being, it is impossible that their cause also is being – for a cause must be greater than its effects. If the first principle *is*, even if it *is* infinitely, then the forms would have to be something less than perfect being – but perfect being is precisely what they are, thus their cause must *not be*. As Etienne Gilson writes of Neoplatonic thought, “it is a general rule that the lower grades of reality *are* only because their cause *is not*.”<sup>63</sup>

What, then, is a Christian Neoplatonist to do with this God beyond-being, when Scripture seems to identify God as being? Gilson asserts that a Christian metaphysics is necessarily a metaphysics which focuses on being as the first principle; each grade lower in the hierarchy “owes its own being to the fact that the first principle itself *is*”<sup>64</sup> – in contrast to Neoplatonic metaphysics, which Gilson calls the “meta-

<sup>60</sup> *En.* V.I.5.8-9.

<sup>61</sup> *En.* V.I.5.

<sup>62</sup> Lloyd Gerson, for example, maintains this position in his work, *Plotinus* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 26. Gerson states that Plotinus’ notion of the One as beyond being merely refers to the fact that the One is not a *limited* being (i.e. is not a form), not that the One does not possess being. For a similar position, see: John Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967), 24-37. This interpretation of Plotinus would certainly place Plotinus’ concept of the One closer to the thought of Thomas Aquinas. Gilson sees this as an error which he attributes to the fact that many try to equate the Platonic/Plotinian good/One with the Christian God of being. *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952), 24-29.

<sup>63</sup> Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952), 23 (emphasis added).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

physics of the One.”<sup>65</sup> For Gilson, there is no manner of reconciling these two metaphysics. Rather, to be a Christian metaphysician is, at its core, to refute the errors of Neoplatonism, to refute the Neoplatonic God beyond being, and, necessarily along with it, the Neoplatonic understanding of participation, i.e. the connections between the sensible order, the forms, and God. Gilson summarizes this view quite clearly: “Psychologically speaking, one cannot philosophize as a Neoplatonist, and believe as a Christian; logically speaking, one cannot, at one and the same time, be a Neoplatonist and a Christian.”<sup>66</sup>

Yet, such a strict dichotomy between Neoplatonism and Christianity did not exist in the eight hundred years between Proclus and Thomas Aquinas. It is not until we arrive at the thirteenth century that we find a Christian philosopher who so definitively asserts that God is being to the effect of wholly eliminating from Christian thought the Neoplatonic understanding of God as beyond-being, and, along with it, the Neoplatonic concept of participation. In the intervening years, we find a series of Christian philosophers who, to a greater or lesser extent, fall under the influence of (pagan) Neoplatonism.

Augustine, for example, seems, at first glance, to follow Scripture to the letter in asserting that God is being. Yet, in speaking of creation’s relationship to God, Augustine indicates God as something more than being. Regarding, first of all, the way in which creatures reveal God through their *being*, Augustine writes:

I asked the sea and the deeps, and the creeping things, and they answered me: We are not thy God, seek above us.... And I replied unto all these, which stand so round about these doors of my flesh: Answer me concerning my God, since you are not he, answer me something of him. And they cried out with a loud voice: He made us.<sup>67</sup>

Here, Augustine indicates that creatures show a connection to God through their very being inasmuch as God is the cause of their being.

Yet, Augustine goes on to say: “My questioning with them was my thought; and their answer was their beauty (*species*)” and later “their very nature (*natura*) says this.”<sup>68</sup> In these latter passages, it is clear that creatures bear a connection to God, not only through their being i.e. insofar as they owe him their existence, but also through their intelligible content, i.e. their *species* (translatable as either beauty or form) and their nature. Here, it is unclear whether this participation in God via the intelligible content of things is a direct participation, i.e. that God directly causes

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 31. Here, Gilson is thinking of Aquinas as the ideal Christian philosopher, since, in Aquinas, we find that perfect logical clarity in the concept of God as being. For Aquinas, God is not beyond being, but rather is infinite being, *esse*, above the finite beings of creation (*entia*). The forms, then, for Aquinas, are distinct from being, taken to be mere potentialities of being in relation to the pure act of *esse*. We will discuss this in further detail in chapter 5.

<sup>67</sup> Augustine, *Conf.* X.6.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

intelligibility, or if Augustine is speaking merely in a poetical manner. Moreover, it is also unclear whether Augustine maintains an equation of being and essence, or if he intends a distinction between the two. If the former is the case, Augustine would not be able to maintain that God is purely being, as someone like Aquinas does.

Augustine's seemingly Neoplatonic relationship between creatures and God appears more explicitly Neoplatonic when Augustine explains God's creative activity. For Augustine, God generates an internal word, i.e. the second person of the Trinity, which is one with him and which is then expressed as an exterior word, i.e. as creation<sup>69</sup> – this is analogous to when someone forms a word in one's mind and then expresses it audibly. With Augustine's concept of the interior word, we find something quite akin to the Plotinian Intellect, insofar as it is through the Word that God gives intelligibility to his creation – although Augustine is careful to identify the Word with God himself, so as not to hypostasize it.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, Augustine seems very much to indicate that God himself, through the Word, directly causes the intelligibility of things when he draws an analogy between God's causal power and the hearing of a word, using the word, *temetum*, as his example.<sup>71</sup> Augustine explains that when someone hears this word, he recognizes it as a symbol of some meaning, which at first is unknown to him: the hearer accordingly recognizes "that it is not a mere sound, but that it signifies something."<sup>72</sup> That which is signified, the "articulated *species*,"<sup>73</sup> makes itself known to the hearer through the symbol (e.g. the audible word, *temetum*), in order for him to be able to recognize the existence of the *species*.<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, the hearer goes beyond the mere stuff of the word, i.e. the sounds and letters, to knowledge of what is signified.<sup>75</sup> Augustine writes: "What more can be required for his greater knowledge, if all the letters and all the spaces of sound are already known, unless it shall have become known to him at the same time that it is a sign, and shall have moved him with the desire of knowing the thing of which it is the sign?"<sup>76</sup> The word *temetum* enters in through the senses while its hidden meaning is recognized by the mind although not fully known; analogously, so are the species of created things understood by the soul when it recognizes them as signs pointing back to God himself. According to this analogy with God's causality, we see again that lingering view that the very intelligible

---

<sup>69</sup> *De Trin.* XV.11.

<sup>70</sup> To do so would be to say that the second person of the Trinity, the Son or the Word, is inferior to the Father, which clearly goes against the basic Christian teaching that the three persons of the Trinity are equal. Additionally, to hypostasize the Intellect would posit a kind of Divinity between creation and God, which again would go against Christian teaching.

<sup>71</sup> *Temetum* was a word for wine which was out of date by Augustine's time. *Trin.* X.1.2.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Note that Augustine uses the word "species" here, which I have provided in place of the translator's "form," since Augustine did not use the word "*forma*" but "*species*" which unlike "*forma*" means either beauty or form.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

content of things is caused directly by, and thus participates directly in, God himself – this content being not merely *that* these things exist, just as the letters and sounds of the word are not alone revelatory of the meaning, but precisely *what* things are, just as what is sought when hearing the word is the “species” of the word.

We see, moreover, Augustine’s tendency to incorporate Neoplatonism into his understanding of God in his, notably brief, discussion of the ideas in God’s mind in *de Diversis Quaestionibus*.<sup>77</sup> Here, we find in Augustine the “Christian Neoplatonic” view that the ideas are contained in some manner in God. While Augustine, however, does not go much into the details of this “containing,” the position nevertheless would be an odd one to maintain along with a God of being à la Aquinas, insofar as it would be unclear how a principle of being would be able to contain within *himself* the multiplicity of ideas of the intelligible nature of his creation.

From the above, we can see at least a hesitation on Augustine’s part to relinquish that (pagan) Neoplatonic understanding that some sort of divine principle (God, the hypostases, etc.) is revealed through the very intelligible content of sensible things. Yet, Augustine does not give us much more than a hint at how the forms, if *they* are being, are to be unified in God, i.e. in the Word. Thus, while Augustine certainly does name God as being, he does not apply to his understanding of participation all of the implications of that claim about God – such as we see Aquinas do in maintaining that participation in God occurs through the order of being alone. Augustine rather retains a quasi-Neoplatonic notion of participation, despite the fact that this might rather imply that God is beyond being.<sup>78</sup>

Marius Victorinus, an older contemporary of Augustine, preserves Neoplatonism in his (Christian) metaphysics somewhat more systematically than Augustine. For Victorinus, God is called “being,” but, more properly, God is called “non-being.” In his *Liber de Generatione Verbi Divini*, Victorinus asks “What therefore may we call God?”<sup>79</sup> In answer to this question, Victorinus responds: “τὸ ὄν, ἢ τὸ μὴ ὄν (being and non-being).”<sup>80</sup> Victorinus continues:

But certainly we may call him ὄν, since he is the father of the things which are. But the father of the things which are is not being (τὸ ὄν)... [but rather] non-being (μὴ ὄν) may be called the cause of the things which are. For the cause is prior to those things of which it is the cause. Therefore, God is supreme ὄν (being), and just as He is supreme, God is called μὴ ὄν (non-being).<sup>81</sup>

<sup>77</sup> *Div. qu.* 46. For a discussion of this, particularly in relation to Aquinas, see: Vivian Boland, *Ideas in God According to Saint Thomas Aquinas: Sources and Synthesis* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 45–48.

<sup>78</sup> Regardless of these perhaps Neoplatonic tendencies in Augustine’s thought, Gilson praises Augustine for abandoning the Platonic God and embracing the true Christian teaching of God as being, what Gilson calls the “faultless rectitude of Augustine’s Christian feeling.” See: Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952), 31.

<sup>79</sup> *De Gen. Verb.* Vol. VIII, col. 1022. “Quid igitur dicimus Deum?” (my translation).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* “Sed utique ipsum appellamus ὄν: quoniam eorum quae sunt, pater est. Set pater eorum quae sunt, non est τὸ ὄν... μὴ ὄν causam appellare. Causa enim prior est ab iis quorum causa est. Supremum ὄν igitur Deus est: et juxta quod supremum est, μὴ ὄν Deus dicitur” (my translation).

In this passage, Victorinus is making a twofold assertion about God: that he is being and is beyond-being, both being and non-being. On the one hand, God is called non-being insofar as he causes being and a cause cannot be identical in kind to its effect – here, Victorinus is simply following the Neoplatonic understanding of causation and participation. On the other hand, Victorinus extends Neoplatonic causation and participation to accommodate the name of God as being in Scripture. He reasons that because God is the cause of being, i.e. “the father of the things which are,” God also, in a sense, is being because there must be some likeness between a cause and its effects. The general notion, again Neoplatonic, is that the effect must in some way be in its cause, kindred to it, in order for the cause to be able to bring about the effect. Accordingly, being is in God as an effect is in a cause, and in this way, we may also call God being – although more properly he is called non-being. Insofar as Victorinus seems to indicate in these passages that God is beyond-being, God’s causal efficacy seems not to be restricted to the order of being. Rather, Victorinus’ notion of God would seem then to accommodate the Neoplatonic twofold participation via being and intelligibility – yet, now (as for Augustine) in God himself. Indeed, this is similar to what we saw indicated in Augustine, recalling the Neoplatonic notion of a God beyond being and, along with it, the possibility of a twofold participation of sensible things both via being and intelligibility.

My main point here is that in Augustine and Victorinus there is some hesitance to eliminate entirely Neoplatonic participation, and thus their naming of God as being seems far less definitive than we find in Aquinas. However, while the view that God is beyond-being is only hinted at by Augustine and just briefly described by Victorinus, Dionysius fully commits to this position. Indeed, Dionysius explicitly centers his metaphysics around a God who is most fundamentally beyond being and, at the same time, more systematically addresses the problem of collapsing the hypostases of the Neoplatonic system into one God.

Dionysius very clearly speaks of God as both being and as beyond-being. Explaining how God is beyond-being, he writes: “If, as is indeed the case, the good is above all being, then we are bound to say that what is above all form, gives form; that He who remains in Himself without essence is the acme of essence; that, being a lifeless reality, He is supreme life; that being a reality without intelligence, he is supreme wisdom, and so on....”<sup>82</sup> Like any Neoplatonist, Dionysius follows the principle that to be (τὸ ὄν) is to be intelligible (τὸ νοητόν). Accordingly, in the sense that God is not being, he is also not intelligible, and so he is beyond all knowledge: “For if all knowledges are of beings and have their limit in beings, that which is beyond all being also transcends all knowledge.”<sup>83</sup> Thus, with regard to the question of knowing God, Dionysius writes: “[God] is superior to every expression and every knowledge,

---

<sup>82</sup> DN IV.3.

<sup>83</sup> DN 1.4.

and is altogether placed above mind and essence – being such as embraces and unites and comprehends and anticipates all things, but Itself is altogether incomprehensible to all.”<sup>84</sup>

Yet, for Dionysius, God can also be called “being”: “[A]nd let us praise the good as veritable being, and giving essence to all things that be.”<sup>85</sup> In this passage, however, Dionysius does not name God as being in an unqualified way. Rather, this name of God (being) is used to express God’s relationship to being as its cause. As Dionysius writes: “[F]or the being (εἶναι) of all things is the Deity beyond being (ἡ ὑπὲρ εἶναι θεότης).”<sup>86</sup> Thus, God is not, but is the “being to things that be.”<sup>87</sup> In the most proper sense, God, as he was for Plotinus, is called beyond-being, beyond all that he causes.<sup>88</sup> However, like Victorinus, Dionysius calls God being in the qualified sense that God is the cause of being, and an effect is always present (or pre-contained) in its cause. In this way, remembering that being = intelligibility, Dionysius avoids hypostasizing the intelligibles;<sup>89</sup> i.e. inasmuch as Dionysius considers God to be the direct cause of being in all things, God is also then the direct cause of intelligibility. God thereby takes over the role of the Intellect and eliminates the need for the separate, mediating hypostasis.

Using the method of naming the cause by its effects, Dionysius extends the list of names which we give to God – taking a step beyond Augustine and Victorinus. Insofar, then, as God is the cause of life, truth, intellect, wisdom, etc., we may call him all of these other names: “the Age of things that be, Time of things coming into being, being of things howsoever being, Birth of things howsoever born.”<sup>90</sup> This does not mean that God is literally (i.e. in his essence) time, age, being, and birth. Rather, we call God by these names in the sense that *from him* “is age, and essence, and being, and time, and birth, and things born; the reality of things that be, and things howsoever existing and subsisting.”<sup>91</sup> Similarly, Dionysius writes: “Wherefore, He is also called the King of the ages, since the whole of being both is, and is sustained, in Him and around Him. And He neither was, nor will be, nor became, nor becomes, nor will become – yea, rather neither is.”<sup>92</sup> Thus, although God himself is not being or age or life, etc., we may call him being or we may call

<sup>84</sup> *DN* I.5.

<sup>85</sup> *DN* V.4.

<sup>86</sup> *HH* IV.1.

<sup>87</sup> *DN* V.4.

<sup>88</sup> It is important to note that here Dionysius uses the infinite verb εἶναι, as opposed to ὄν, making it all the more clear that God is not only beyond *beings* but also beyond the very act of being itself. This clearly indicates that Dionysius does not mean that God is “being beyond being” in the sense that he is perfect or infinite being beyond finite imperfect beings. *DN* V.4.

<sup>89</sup> This will be explained further in the following two sections.

<sup>90</sup> *DN* V.4.

<sup>91</sup> *DN* V.4.

<sup>92</sup> *DN* V.4.

him non-being; we may name him and we may not. God may be celebrated “without name and from every name.”<sup>93</sup>

To the extent that Dionysius speaks of God as beyond being, he follows the Neoplatonists in using “the good” (or “the beautiful”) as the most proper name of God. Yet, Dionysius is also careful to clarify that being (or age, or life, etc.) is not something different or separate from the good/God:

[It is not] that the good is one thing and being another; and that Life is other than Wisdom; nor that the causes are many and that some deities produce one thing and others another, as superior and inferior; but that the whole good progressions and the Names of God, celebrated by us, are of one God; and that the one epithet [i.e. the good] makes known the complete providence of the one God, but that the others are indicative of His more general and more particular providences.<sup>94</sup>

This understanding of the ways in which we may call God being, life, wisdom, etc. (i.e. all names and no names), will become clearer as we continue to see the causal efficacy of God as being, as wisdom, as life, etc., and to see why the good (i.e. beyond-being) is the most general and most central.

Inasmuch as Dionysius considers God to be not only the good beyond being but also the “being of things which be” (i.e. in a sense, himself the forms), Dionysius can re-conceive Neoplatonic participation as theophany; i.e. for Dionysius, creation is not only an appearance of the forms (in the manner of the “irradiations” posited by Proclus), but also a direct appearance of God. Of theophany Dionysius writes: “Now the all-wise Word of God (*Theologia*) naturally calls Theophany that particular vision which manifests the Divine similitude depicted in itself as a shape [i.e. the appearance] of the shapeless....”<sup>95</sup>

From the first names of God, good and being, as discussed above, we can see that Dionysius is clearly naming God by looking to God’s effects. These names indicate more precisely what Dionysius calls the “providences” of God, each of which specifies a certain range of God’s causality in more specific or more general terms – the most proper name, i.e. the good (or the beautiful), indicating God’s broadest causal efficacy. Following the good and being, Dionysius calls God life inasmuch as he “is extended to all things living,” and wisdom as he is “extended to all the intellectual and rational and sensible.”<sup>96</sup> Dionysius thus considers that God’s causality stretches from the most specific providence which extends to the highest of creatures up to the broadest providence which extends to all creatures, even, as we shall see, to those which lack existence.

To be clear, none of these providences of God are separate powers. Rather, they are one power expressed in a more or less specific manner and render each creature

<sup>93</sup> DN I.5.

<sup>94</sup> DN V.2.

<sup>95</sup> HH IV.3.

<sup>96</sup> DN V.1. This same thought is repeated again in HH IV.1.

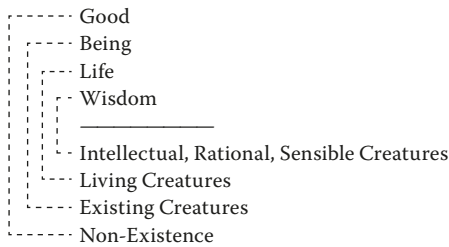


as an appearance of God in a way proper to each. The divine providences, then, are seen as distinct and multiple only from the point of view of his creation, i.e. as they appear in creation, while in God there is neither division nor ranking. Thus, of the divine providences, Dionysius writes:

For It is not only cause of sustenance, or life, or perfection, – so that from this or that forethought alone the goodness above Name should be named, but It previously embraced in Itself all things existing, absolutely and without limit, by the complete benefactions of His one and all-creating forethought, and by all created things in joint accord It is celebrated and named.<sup>97</sup>

Accordingly, even the name of the good is not wholly expressive of what God is because it only expresses one of God’s providences, albeit the most all-encompassing. Thus, it is more accurate still to refer to God as the Nameless insofar as “the Nameless” expresses God in himself as beyond his effects: “[T]he ‘Nameless’ befits the cause of all which is also above all.”<sup>98</sup>

To summarize, then, the divine providences and their effects can be viewed in the following way, according to how they appear in the created order:



At the top of this chart, we see the most proper name of God: the good, which extends to things which both exist and things which do not exist.<sup>99</sup> *Beneath* this is being. While Dionysius calls God the good insofar as he extends to everything as cause, whether his effects be or not be, he calls God “being” insofar as God extends precisely and only to things which *are*: he is “the being of things that be” yet the “Deity beyond being.”<sup>100</sup> As himself “being,” God extends to all existing creation, even to those lacking knowledge, sensation, or even life. Dionysius writes: “All things without life, participate in It by their being.”<sup>101</sup>

God, named as being, causes not only the mere fact that something exists but also its intelligible nature, its essence. As Dionysius says, just as God is the “being of

<sup>97</sup> *Divine Names* I.VII.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> This would include matter, which is pure potency, as well as privations found in existing things. This latter point we will discuss in our final chapter on Bonaventure.

<sup>100</sup> *HH* IV.1.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

things which have being,<sup>102</sup> he is “the essence of things that be.”<sup>103</sup> Here, Dionysius does not stray from that Platonic maxim that being = intelligibility. Yet, as a Christian philosopher, instead of hypostasizing the forms, Dionysius makes them one with God so that it is God himself who directly provides being and intelligibility to the sensible cosmos. However, how does Dionysius explain participation in God via the intelligibility of things, when the intelligibles are a multiplicity and God is one?

On the exact relationship between the forms and God, Dionysius does not say much but gives us a clue in the following: “For It is not only the cause of sustenance, or life, or perfection – so that from this or that forethought alone the goodness above Name should be named, but It previously embraced in Itself all things existing, absolutely and without limit, by the complete benefactions of His one and all creating forethought....”<sup>104</sup> Again, Dionysius writes “the cause of all things ... pre-contained in itself all beings, simply and indeterminately.”<sup>105</sup>

In these passages, Dionysius indicates that God himself causes directly the intelligibility of all things, inasmuch as God pre-contains all intelligibility within himself as its cause: “... [God] is the Monad and Unit tri-subistent, sending forth His most kindly forethought to all things being, from the super-heavenly Minds to the lowest of the earth; as super-original Origin and Cause of every essence, and grasping all things super-essentially in a resistless embrace.”<sup>106</sup> Insofar as God is the cause of being, every instance of being, of intelligibility, within the created order is a revelation of God – of a God who is beyond being – and, thus, all of creation is an unfolding and differentiation of what was hidden and simple in God: “[T]he superessential Godhead, having fixed all the essence of things being, brought them into being.”<sup>107</sup> God for Dionysius is the “superunknown Isolation” and “Union” from whom there proceeds “distinctions” among his creation, i.e. “the goodly progressions and the manifestations of the Godhead.”<sup>108</sup> Any being, and with it any intelligibility, which a creature possesses is nothing more than the presence of God within it.

This, then, is the key foundational development which Dionysius makes upon pagan Neoplatonic thought: that one principle, not a series of hypostases, “contains” within itself and can be understood as the cause of all multiplicity. While for the pagan Neoplatonists certainly all multiplicity is caused by that which is itself single and unified, these causes were still themselves multiple insofar as there were three hypostases. Here, Dionysius eliminates the necessity of a three-tiered hierarchy of hypostases, by radicalizing what is perhaps the most foundational maxim in

---

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> *DN* I.3.

<sup>104</sup> *DN* I.8.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. This will be the foundational concept for Bonaventure in explaining the forms’ relationship to God.

<sup>106</sup> *HH* VII.7.

<sup>107</sup> *HH* IV.1.

<sup>108</sup> *DN* II.4.

Neoplatonic thought: that an effect resides in its cause. Moreover, in collapsing the hypostases more explicitly than we find in earlier Christian Neoplatonists, such as Augustine or Victorinus, Dionysius can provide an understanding of God and his providences which allows for participation both via being and intelligibility to occur immediately in God. For Dionysius, the providences of God do not need to be distinguished from one another as separate hypostases – there is only multiplicity, i.e. among God’s providences, from the point of view of human beings, who see only the effects of God, who see being expressed differently from goodness, and from wisdom, and from beauty, and from life, etc. However, from the point of view of the first cause these are all one – they need not be distinguished out into three. This is, then, precisely how Dionysius is able to collapse the hypostases into one God: by asserting that what the pagan Neoplatonists were seeing as multiple is rather unified, i.e. that they were examining causes in a manner which is rather appropriate to effects – we rank *effects* into hierarchies and see them as number, but in approaching a *first cause*, we have to abandon such a way of thinking. Indeed, this is no cosmetic fix made to appropriate pagan Neoplatonism into Christian monotheism. Rather, Dionysius is drawing out the implications of a metaphysical position already held in pagan Neoplatonism – implications which turn out to be wholly compatible with Christian monotheism.

While Bonaventure is not concerned with the task of synthesizing Neoplatonism with Christianity, as Dionysius is, it is Dionysius’ basic view of the relationship between being and God which will be key for Bonaventure. In building his own ontological hierarchy, in which Aristotle provides the basic claim that it is forms which occupy the rank of being, Bonaventure follows Dionysius and uses him as a key source and authority in then asserting that it is the good which is God’s most proper name and that we call him “being” in only a qualified sense, i.e. in the sense that he is the cause of being. Thus, while Dionysius himself is working almost exclusively with Neoplatonic thought, he comes to a conclusion which Bonaventure sees in neat accordance with his own decidedly Aristotelian ontology – this making Dionysius, often more than Augustine, a useful source for Bonaventure.

### 3. ARISTOTLE VIA AVICENNA AND THE EARLY FRANCISCAN TRADITION, OR WHAT EXACTLY IS ARISTOTELIANISM?

Bonaventure is far from the first generation of medieval thinkers to have access to the thought of Aristotle – and indeed is not the first even within the Franciscan tradition itself. A fruitful new field of research which has developed over the last fifteen years or so has been a more detailed study of the way in which Aristotle was received by the Franciscans before Bonaventure via their use of Avicenna. A number of scholars have found solid evidence that far from simply being an orthodox reiteration of Augustinian views – which would be philosophically uninteresting

– the earlier Franciscans were actively synthesizing Augustine with Avicenna in ways which indeed often seem much more Avicennian than Augustinian.<sup>109</sup> The characterization of this period as “Avicennizing-Augustinianism” was first made in fact by Etienne Gilson in his aptly titled, “Les source gréco-arabes de l’augustinisme avicennisant” (1929–30).<sup>110</sup> More recent scholarship has identified a key set of positions held by these “Avicennized Augustinians,” which are indicative of their general historical and philosophical attitudes: (1) a plurality of substantial forms; (2) a body-soul dualism, resolved with the form of corporeity; and (3) divine illumination, which we will leave aside for our purposes in this chapter.<sup>111</sup> In addition to this we can add a position which is not found in Avicenna, but which is championed by the Franciscans, (4) spiritual matter – whose inspiration is found rather in the texts of Avicenna. We should also lay on the table for discussion a position which is found in Avicenna but perhaps not so forcefully in the early Franciscans, which is (5) the indifference of essence – a doctrine which is adopted certainly by the Dominican, Thomas Aquinas, in some form or another, but which only perhaps has an echo in the Franciscan *quo/quod est* distinction.

To tackle these topics in the above order, I would like to question first of all the assumption that a doctrine of plurality of substantial forms, in addition to being a “doctrine” at all (particularly in Bonaventure’s thought), is inherently un-Aristotelian. First of all, the claim that Bonaventure held a doctrine of a plurality of forms is based more on the absence of a doctrine than it is on the presence of one. By this I mean that Bonaventure is often said to maintain a plurality doctrine simply because he never endorses a unicity doctrine. However, he never argues for either position or even addresses the question of whether there is one substantial form or many.<sup>112</sup> This is in part because during Bonaventure’s time in Paris, the unicity doctrine was not such an issue – and did not become one until the time of John Peckham at Oxford, who then addressed the issue head-on contra the views of Thomas Aquinas.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>109</sup> For a detailed summary of the history of the reception of Avicenna in scholastic thought see: Amos Bertolacci, “On the Latin Reception of Avicenna’s Metaphysics before Albertus Magnus: An Attempt at Periodization” in *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna’s Metaphysics* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 197–223.

<sup>110</sup> Étienne Gilson, “Les sources gréco-arabes de l’augustinisme avicennisant,” *Archive d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen Age* 4 (1929–30): 5–149.

<sup>111</sup> Schumacher targets these as the key issues as well, building on Gilson: Lydia Schumacher, “Christian Platonism in the Medieval West,” in *Christian Platonism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2021), 183–206.

<sup>112</sup> For this kind of reconstruction of Bonaventure’s doctrine of a plurality of substantial forms, see: Richard Dales, *The Problem of the Rational Soul in the Thirteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 99–107. To be clear, I ultimately do agree with the view that Bonaventure does endorse a doctrine of a plurality of substantial forms, as I will argue in chapter 6. To the contrary, and in evidence of the relative ambiguity of Bonaventure’s position, some scholars have argued that Bonaventure implicitly endorses a unicity doctrine not a pluralist one. See: John F. Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure’s Philosophy* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1973), 236–317.

<sup>113</sup> For a more in-depth history of this debate between Peckham and Aquinas, see the introduction to my book, *An Introduction to the Metaphysical Thought of John Peckham* (Milwaukee, WI: Mar-

The key reason why scholars consider that Bonaventure would (not *did*) endorse a plurality of substantial forms is the fact that he seems to consider light to be the substantial form of all bodies – and since not everything in the world is simply and exclusively a light, this implies that Bonaventure would admit of at least two substantial forms: light and whatever other more specific form it is that makes some particular substance not merely a light, e.g. cat, dog, horse, etc. This, however, is not a great deal of evidence – at least as it has been presented in scholarship. Quite to the contrary, John Francis Quinn makes the argument that Bonaventure actually does implicitly endorse a *unicity* doctrine by attempting to show that Bonaventure does not consider light to be a substantial form at all, thereby pulling the rug out from under the argument that Bonaventure would have to side against his contemporary, Thomas Aquinas, in the debate. We will discuss this issue, of course, in much more detail in chapter 6, but for now it suffices to say that Bonaventure did not come down hard and fast on this issue to such a great extent that it would characterize his view as non-Aristotelian – were the plurality doctrine non-Aristotelian in the first place.

However, it isn't. Aristotle himself makes no mention of something called a "substantial form," and should we take the "substantial predicates" of the *Categories* as being something like what Aristotle would consider a substantial form, it is clear that he admits not only of species but also of genus – i.e. *both* species and genus are secondary *substance*, even though species is perhaps "more" substance than genus. Indeed, the division which Aristotle makes when it comes to substance in the *Categories* is not between species as substantial and genus as non-substantial, but between species *and* genus as substantial and the other nine *Categories* as being non-substantial, i.e. as being accidental. And it is precisely this doctrine from the *Categories* which Bonaventure makes explicit use of in developing his own view of substance and accident – as we will see in chapter 4. Thus, a unicity doctrine is not something which is found in Aristotle, but which is found in some medieval *interpretations* of Aristotle, e.g., in Thomas Aquinas', but not in Bonaventure's – or in Avicenna's.

Now one might say that perhaps because Bonaventure's reading of Aristotle is sometimes in accordance with Avicenna's, we should say that he is influenced by Avicenna. To this, one can only reply with a "perhaps." Insofar as Bonaventure does not make much explicit use of Avicenna, it is indeed difficult to say with certainty one way or another. However, as we will discuss momentarily, Bonaventure's view of form is quite different from Avicenna's, which would perhaps not make Avicenna

---

quette University Press, 2023). For a more general history of where different figures stood, see: Robert Pasnau, "Form and Matter," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014), 635–646. For the discussion of the thinkers who held the pluralist position, see esp. pp. 644–646. Those who maintain the pluralist position: Avicenna, Ibn Gabirol, Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus, and Ockham. In addition to Aquinas, those who argued in favor of the unicity of substantial form include John Buridan, Albert of Saxony, and Francisco Suárez.

the first place where Bonaventure would look for an interpretation of Aristotle on this point. Thus, if there is an influence from Avicenna, I would say it would not be so formative in Bonaventure's reading of Aristotle, but simply an external affirmation of something which Bonaventure already saw developed in the *Categories*.

The question of a body-soul dualism admits of a similar assessment as the plurality of forms does – it is not something which is inherently Aristotelian, but inherently *Thomistic*. Let's outline the different positions one could have in this debate. First of all, one could be Thomas Aquinas and understand that the soul is the form of the body and thereby, like any form in Aquinas' ontology, the soul is likewise inherent in and dependent upon the matter in which it is instantiated. Thus, without an act of God, it is not possible that the soul exist as separate from the body – or, put differently, the immortality of the soul is not something which can be grasped by philosophy alone. The downside of this position is that it appeals ultimately to a doctrine of faith in order to preserve the immortality of the soul. The upside is that it accounts fully for the unity of soul and body, at least as it is in this life. Alternatively, one could be Avicenna in this debate and maintain that the soul and body are two distinct substances which are only *accidentally* brought together. The soul is utterly simple, and the body is “this particular body” by virtue of a composition of matter and a form of bodily nature – namely, a form of corporeity. This position, while sacrificing the neat unity of soul and body, can maintain philosophically that the soul is immortal. It has the added upshot in a Christian context that it also can resolve another hotly debated theological issue: that Christ's body remains his body in the interim between his dying on the cross and being resurrected, despite the fact his soul has left the body. This view of Avicenna is precisely the view which is then endorsed by the *Summa Halensis*, as it is written by John de la Rochelle,<sup>114</sup> as well as by later Franciscans such as John Peckham.<sup>115</sup>

Where, then, does Aristotle stand? While Schumacher attributes the soul-body dualism of the authors of the *Summa Halensis* to Avicenna, she also does well to point out that John de la Rochelle did not in fact see himself as interpreting Avicenna *per se*, but attributed this view to Aristotle.<sup>116</sup> John de la Rochelle here provides quite a creative interpretation of Aristotle's somewhat infamous claim that the soul is the form of the body (which seems to imply “inseparable from the body”) in order to justify that Aristotle still maintains a separable soul, by outlining the different senses in which one could mean “form.” The question one could raise here is whether or not John and Avicenna's interpretations are not actually correct – and perhaps whether it is Aquinas' interpretation which is wrong. Ultimately, in

---

<sup>114</sup> For a summary of John's position, see Lydia Schumacher “Christian Platonism in the Medieval West,” in *Christian Platonism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2021), 195–7.

<sup>115</sup> For Peckham's position, see again my book: *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of John Peckham* (Marquette, WI: Marquette Univ. Press, 2022).

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

response to such a question, I would say: neither is correct. But, to be kinder, both are *understandable* interpretations of Aristotle's emphatically unclear position. In contemporary scholarship, Aristotle's position is indeed far from understood as black and white, as so much of medieval scholarship portrays it.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, there are numerous contemporary articles written that assert, rather, that Aristotle does consider at least a "part" of the soul as separable from the body<sup>118</sup> – and many scholars have gone so far as to characterize Aristotle himself as a proponent of a strict mind-body dualism.<sup>119</sup>

The best evidence for the claim that (at least part of) the soul is separable is located at *De Anima* 413b, where Aristotle entertains just this: "The further questions, whether each of these faculties is a soul, or part of a soul, and, if a part, whether a part in the sense that it is only separable in thought or also in fact, are in some cases easy of solution, but in some they involve difficulty." And his response to his proposed difficulty is that certainly the souls of plants and animals, as well as the parts of the human soul which are held in common in plants and animals, do not admit of separation. However, "...in the case of the mind and the thinking faculty nothing is yet clear, but it seems to be a distinct species of soul, and *it alone admits of being separated*, as the immortal from the perishable. But it is quite clear from what we have said that the other parts of the soul are not separable..." Thus, a relatively simple argument on the part of the interpreter takes form: Aristotle may maintain that the soul is inseparable and mortal, but the *intellect* is separable and immortal. However, this is but one comment which Aristotle makes – and he makes it in a work which appears to approach the soul for the most part from a *functionalist* perspective. Thus, we arrive at a paradox – and, at that, one for which there are different approaches in resolving. While some scholars, particularly those who advocate a "developmental" reading of Aristotle's corpus, consider this simply to be a nod to Aristotle's earlier thought or to the traditional theological view that the soul endures after death, there is a great deal of scholarship which takes the view to be authentic – and indeed that it highlights a tension in Aristotle's work which should be, and is, an important topic of study.<sup>120</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> For an obvious example of this treatment of both Aristotle and Plato, see: Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952). For Gilson's treatment of Aristotle's view of being and substance, which he claims himself is self-evident from the texts, see pp. 46–64. Far from it, Aristotle's view of substance is one of the most debated topics in contemporary scholarship. Gilson, clearly, is a scholar of medieval not ancient philosophy, but the point here is that it has been considered valid in medieval scholarship to present Aristotle's positions as if they were entirely evident from the text and not open to a variety of interpretations.

<sup>118</sup> Fred D. Miller, "Aristotle on the Separability of Mind," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*, ed. Christopher Shields (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2012).

<sup>119</sup> See, for example, Robert Heineman, "Aristotle and the Mind-Body Problem," *Phronesis* 35, no. 1 (1990): 83–102.

<sup>120</sup> O'Meara, for example, argues against the view that Aristotle's apparent endorsement of a separable soul (or intellect) in some respect is not merely a religious "relic" which finds its way into Ar-

Moreover, in further opposition to the view that Aristotle does not have room for a separable intellect in his philosophy, there have been studies also of Aristotle's fragments, in which he seems to have developed this view at length – and indeed formulated it in a manner similar to that in *De Anima*.<sup>121</sup> Such a view we find developed by Abraham P. Bos, who addresses head-on the issue of the separability of the intellect in the *Eudemus*, and is also one which would be supported very much by my own work on Aristotle's fragments.<sup>122</sup>

Thus, while I do have to say I have a dog in this fight, I would agree with the side of the debate which considers the moderate position that while Aristotle treats the soul itself in a kind of proto-functionalist fashion, he nonetheless maintains the intellect is separable. And such a view is neither that which is proposed by Avicenna and John de la Rochelle, nor that which is proposed by Aquinas. It is, however, something which lies in between the two and can easily be seen to lend itself to both interpretations. Given the other alternative – i.e. that my endorsed reading of Aristotle is incorrect and Aristotle is in fact the pure functionalist that much of contemporary literature considers him to be – it is at the very least fair to say that Aristotle's position is very far from clear on this point and could be interpreted in a number of different ways: (1) the contemporary dualist way, (2) the contemporary “only the intellect is separable” way, (3) the functionalist way, (4) Aquinas' way, and (5) Avicenna's way – at the very least.<sup>123</sup>

If, moreover, we do entertain the view of Aristotle which I am endorsing, it should also be noted that such a view does not have the need of a form of corporeity, insofar as the form of the body is still the soul. Thereby, like Aquinas' interpretation, it avoids the worry of too strict of a soul-body dualism which would threaten the intimate connection between soul and body in this life. On the other hand, it admits of the same criticism that Aquinas' does with respect to the body of Christ – no worry at all for Aristotle, but quite a large one for a medieval interpreter of Aristotle. Thus, it makes sense that the early Franciscans, such as John de la Rochelle, favored greatly the interpretation provided by Avicenna. Moreover, such an interpretation which incorporates a form of bodily nature is also not without some kind of prec-

---

istotle's mature philosophy, but actually a central view of Aristotle's thought. See: Dominic J. O'Meara, “Remarks on Dualism and the Definition of Soul in Aristotle's *De Anima*,” *Museum Helveticum* 44, no. 3 (1987): 168–174.

<sup>121</sup> Abraham P. Bos, “Aristotle's Doctrine of the Instrumental Body of the Soul,” *Philosophia Reformata* 64 (1999): 37–51.

<sup>122</sup> Franziska van Buren, “Circular Motion and Circular Thought,” *Apeiron* 56, no. 1 (2023): 15–42.

<sup>123</sup> Here, we should also note that there is a bit of an issue regarding terminology: to a great extent what Aristotle is calling “intellect” is more similar to what the medievals are calling soul in this context. What Aristotle is asserting is compounded with the body is the soul considered as capable of sensation, appetite, and all of the lower functions of the embodied soul that we share with animals. These are the kinds of activities for which one needs precisely a body in order to engage in them – and it would be *prima facie* odd to maintain the contrary. However, this does not eliminate that soul, now considered *qua* intellect, is still separable.



edent in Aristotle's own thought – such as we find in recent scholarship attempts made by scholars to show the centrality of Aristotle's theory of body to his physics and hylomorphic theory.<sup>124</sup> Thus, while I would consider the Avicennian reading certainly to be *highly* interpretive (indeed more interpretive than Aquinas'), it also is not altogether an absurd or *prima facie* incorrect reading.

None of this, however, addresses where Bonaventure himself stands. While it is not my purpose here to give a full exposition of Bonaventure's account of the relationship between the soul and the body – such would require its own study – here, we can sketch out a few points in Bonaventure's view to see on which side of the debate he seems to stand.<sup>125</sup> First of all – and this should be of great importance to us – Bonaventure, in stark contrast to the earlier Franciscans, and to his student John Peckham, has no account of a form of corporeity. In fact, scholarship has noted it as emphatically absent from Bonaventure's thought.<sup>126</sup> This should alert us to the fact that Bonaventure is departing from the Avicennian reading of the earlier Franciscans.

Bonaventure proposes instead that soul and body are two distinct substances made into one unity by the form of humanity. Soul without body is not human nor is body without soul – but they are brought together by a further form, humanity.<sup>127</sup> This does not however preclude that both the soul and the body of the human being can endure after (or exist before) their union. In this way, Bonaventure's view avoids the strict mind-body dualism of the earlier Franciscans insofar as he has one single form which unites soul and body as one substance – and this is the benefit indeed of avoiding a form of corporeity, which would provide us with two distinct substances.

However, this would open Bonaventure's position up to the same criticism as that of Thomas Aquinas regarding the body of Christ. Moreover, Bonaventure, like Aquinas considers that we can say that the soul is the form of the body – but not in the strict hylomorphic sense which Aquinas takes it to mean. Indeed, in the most precise way, the form of this thing that we call “human being” is not “soul” – but simply the form of “human being.” Nonetheless, it is proper for Bonaventure

<sup>124</sup> See, for example, Christian Pfeiffer, *Aristotle's Theory of Body* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2018).

<sup>125</sup> For a good study of the relationship between soul and body in Bonaventure and its connection to his doctrine of universal hylomorphism, see: Thomas Osborne, “Unibilitas: The Key to Bonaventure's Understanding of Human Nature,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 37, no. 2 (April 1999): 227–250. See also Magdalena Bieniak's discussion of Osborne, in *The Soul-Body Problem at Paris Ca. 1200–1250: Hugh of St. Cher and his Contemporaries* (Leuven: Leuven Univ. Press, 2010), 38–40.

<sup>126</sup> See: C. O'Leary, *The Substantial Composition of Man According to St. Bonaventure* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1931), 70–85.

<sup>127</sup> For Bonaventure's views, see: *In Sent.* II, d. 25, a. u, q. 6, p. 622a-b; *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 2, a. 3. q. 2, p. 50b; *In Sent.* III, d. 2, a. 2, q. 3, p. 48b; *In Sent.* III, d. 21, art. 1, q. 3, p. 441a-b. For an explanation of Bonaventure's position, see: Richard Dales, *The Problem of the Rational Soul in the Thirteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 99–107; Philotheus Boehner, *The History of the Franciscan School: John of Rupella and Saint Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1943), 68–69.

to call the soul the “form of the body” in the sense that it is the cause, principle, and actuality of the body:

For since the soul is capable of beatitude and is immortal, but nevertheless is united with a mortal body and therefore can be separated from it, it is not only the form of this body, but also a substance in itself, and hence it is not only the perfection (entelecheia or form or act) of a body, but also its mover. Hence the soul not only perfects or brings to completion a human body by its essence, but also moves it by its power. Brev. II, 9; t. V, p. 227.<sup>128</sup>

Without sounding anything like the justification which John de la Rochelle gives in the *Summa Halensis*, Bonaventure’s understanding of how the soul is the cause and act of the body does sound very much like Aristotle’s explanation: “But the soul is equally the cause in each of the three senses to which we have referred; for it is the cause in the sense of being that from which motion is derived, in the sense of the purpose or final cause, and as being the substance of all bodies that have souls” (*De An.* 514b10-14).

The benefits of Bonaventure’s view are that, first of all, he avoids the mind-body dualism of the Avicennian view by avoiding the form of corporeity and instead positing one single form which unites soul and body into one substance: the form of humanity. Secondly, now in contrast with Aquinas, because Bonaventure also seems to admit of a plurality of substantial forms, he can say both that the soul has a form (i.e. the soul, as a composite of form and matter, is an individual instance of the universal form of soul in general), and that it also takes on the substantial form of “humanity” (i.e. by virtue of its connexion with the body in this life, it is also an individual instance of the universal form of humanity in general). Aquinas, on the other hand, cannot do this and is forced to choose one single substantial form, namely, the soul, which is then inseparable from its substrate – except by an act of God. Thus, we can characterize Bonaventure’s view on the union of soul and body as indeed an interpretation of Aristotelian positions which strikes a middle ground between that of Aquinas and that of Avicenna. To a great extent, then, Bonaventure is approximating more closely the contemporary reading of Aristotle which, as I mentioned earlier, is likewise a middle ground between the two opposing positions of Aquinas and Avicenna/the early Franciscan school.

Moreover, Bonaventure’s view, as I have presented it, should call to any medievalist’s mind the account of the relationship between soul and body developed by Duns Scotus. Scotus, like Bonaventure, seeks to achieve a unified view of body and soul precisely by utilizing a doctrine of a plurality of forms (or in Bonaventure’s case, simply an account of forms inspired by the *Categories*), while abandoning the form of corporeity. Thus, it seems quite clear that Bonaventure on this issue is not

---

<sup>128</sup> For a very good explanation of Bonaventure’s view of the composition of soul and body, see: Philotheus Boehner, *The History of the Franciscan School, Part 2: John of Rupella and St. Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1944), 68–72.

adhering to the Avicennianism of his forerunners – yet, nor is he using Aristotle in a manner similar to Aquinas. Rather, on this front as well, he is defining a third option for this period of scholasticism, and one which anticipates rather the view of later Franciscans.

However, I do not wish to reduce Bonaventure’s position to that of Duns Scotus. Indeed, there is one very important difference between the two: universal hylomorphism. And this brings us to our penultimate topic. Duns Scotus, unlike Bonaventure, does not maintain universal hylomorphism – and so in this context, while he maintains, very much like Bonaventure, that the soul is a substance which can exist without the body, his understanding of what this substance is differs from Bonaventure’s. For Scotus, the soul is a *forma individualis*, which does not need matter to exist. For Bonaventure, such a notion of an individual form which is prior to any combination with matter is an absurdity – as we will discuss in chapter 6.

For Bonaventure – and this is indeed in agreement with the earlier Franciscan tradition – the soul is a combination of a form and matter, but of precisely *spiritual* matter.<sup>129</sup> This is indeed a view which Bonaventure is taking up from Avicenna, and which likewise was endorsed in the *Summa Halensis*.<sup>130</sup> Thus, I am not here going to attempt at all to say that Bonaventure derives his view of spiritual matter from Aristotle – he emphatically does not. However, I’d like to point out that it is not a view without precedent in Aristotle (as I will discuss momentarily), and one which could be understood as fitting in with some of Aristotle’s views regarding the soul.

Regardless of such a precedent, however, as we saw above, there is a certain tension in Aristotle’s thought regarding the immortality of the soul – which he seems to endorse but not explain in great detail. Indeed, Scotus and Aquinas’ views, which attempt to say that it is the form alone which endures after death, both ultimately appeal to faith to resolve the issue, i.e. both say that philosophy does not provide a real account of how and why the soul could exist without the body. One could make this criticism of Aristotle – indeed, this is how it has been formulated in contemporary scholarship, i.e. that Aristotle in saying that the soul is immortal is expressing simply a theological conviction (perhaps a vestige from the “Platonic years” of his youth, as Jaeger considers)<sup>131</sup> or making a nod to traditional Greek religion instead of substantiating the view philosophically. Thus, in contemporary scholarship, there have been – as we discussed above – different ways of trying to resolve this tension in Aristotle.

One such way was to look at Aristotle’s fragments. In the fragments, Aristotle seems to endorse not only that the intellect is immortal, but also that it is composed

<sup>129</sup> For how Bonaventure develops his view of spiritual matter, see: *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, pp. 89–91; *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 3, pp. 95–98.

<sup>130</sup> *SH* II, n. 60, p. 75.

<sup>131</sup> Werner Jaeger, *Aristoteles: Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1923).

of some kind of “fifth element” – “the unnamed” (ἀκατονόμαστον) or ἐνδελέχεια (“continuous-ness”) – or simply, “aether.” This being the case, then Aristotle, very much like Bonaventure, also maintained a composition of form and a quasi-material principle – not in the soul per se – but in that part of the soul which both the fragments of the *Eudemus* and the (supposedly) later *De Anima* consider to be separable: the intellect. Study of Aristotle’s fragments has only recently in scholarship received renewed interest,<sup>132</sup> so one hopes further research on this question will occur, but nonetheless it suffices to say that contemporary scholarship has arrived at a solution to a paradox in Aristotle not dissimilar to Bonaventure’s. Bonaventure likewise sees something missing from Aristotle’s account of the soul – insofar as he has no access to the fragments – and so he used Avicenna’s account of spiritual matter to resolve such a paradox. Likewise, contemporary scholarship in its attempts to resolve this very same paradox has looked to the fragments to find an answer, and they came upon a strikingly similar one: aether. Thus, while spiritual matter is not something which Bonaventure would have found in Aristotle’s corpus, it is quite a fitting concept to bring into play with Aristotle’s theory of the soul – surprisingly fitting insofar as something akin to spiritual matter seems to have been endorsed by Aristotle at one point or another with his view of the fifth element. Moreover, I think this point highlights a comment I made in the introduction to this book, where I characterized Bonaventure’s use of non-Aristotelian ideas as being a kind of picking and choosing of ideas of Platonic sources which would fit in with or complement the basic ontology which Bonaventure pulls out of Aristotle first and foremost. While we will certainly see other instances of Bonaventure utilizing this method, I think this issue concerning spiritual matter already highlights a good example of how Bonaventure uses non-Aristotelian sources to resolve tensions found in Aristotle’s texts.

The final topic I would like to discuss is now the question of whether Bonaventure’s view of form is strictly Aristotelian or perhaps is influenced also by Avicenna. This is, in fact, the point on which I consider Avicenna and Bonaventure to be most different, and this will be covered in detail in chapter 4 of the present book. Thus, I do not want to go into all of the intricacies of Bonaventure’s view here, but only to discuss Avicenna’s position and outline the main thrust of Bonaventure’s point of departure from such a view.

Avicenna maintains, as it is commonly called, a notion of the “indifference of essence” – captured by the English maxim “quiddity is only quiddity.”<sup>133</sup> By this notion, Avicenna means that being a quiddity, or an essence, does not equate with

---

<sup>132</sup> For example, the recent edited volume: António Pedro Mesquita, Simon Noriega-Olmos and Christopher John Ignatius Shields, eds. *Revisiting Aristotle’s Fragments: New Essays on the Fragments of Aristotle’s Lost Works* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020).

<sup>133</sup> Avicenna, *Ilāhiyyāt* V.1.2.: “fa-l-farasiyya fi nafsi-hā farasiyya faqat” or as it is rendered in Latin “equinitas ergo in se est equinitas tantum.”

“having existence” – thus leading to Avicenna’s view being called a doctrine of “pure essence” insofar as essence is essence “before” it acquires existence. Or, as it is taken up particularly by Aquinas, it is known as a “distinction between essence and existence.” While contemporary scholarship has brought into question whether Avicenna intended his distinction between essence and existence to be real or conceptual (or something in between), as it is received by Aquinas, it is certainly a real distinction – and it seemed so generally to the scholastic mind. The existence which essences acquire is either existence in a sensible thing or in the mind – in the sensible thing, the essence is particular, and in the mind it is (abstracted as a) universal. This is moreover the position emphatically endorsed by Thomas Aquinas, as we will discuss in detail in chapter 2 – and it is the view which Bonaventure explicitly addresses and rejects. Thus, here I would say that it is Aquinas who is the Avicennian in this debate, not Bonaventure, insofar as Bonaventure quite adamantly opposes a view such as Avicenna’s as having an ontological weight. Further, even if we are to take Avicenna’s view as being not quite so radical as Aquinas’, Bonaventure’s emphatic equation between being and essence, as well as his development of two distinct types of extra-mental forms, rules out the characterization of his ontology of form as “Avicennian.”

For Bonaventure, being and (universal) form are intrinsically linked. Indeed, without positing an extra-mental universal which has existence in itself, for Bonaventure, there is no way to provide a grounding for human knowledge. On this point, he argues against the view that maintains that essence exists whenever it exists in a particular thing and that from this existing in the particular, the mind can abstract to the universal essence, which thereby exists only in the mind. Rather, for Bonaventure, the extra-mental existing thing is the universal essence, to which the mind conforms when it knows any universal kind.

To a great extent, and particularly to a contemporary reader, the view which Bonaventure presents as his opposition, i.e. one which we could characterize as “conceptualist,” brings to mind not only the theory of universals in Avicenna, but also that in Aristotle. While Aristotle does not go so far as to posit a doctrine of “pure essence,” as Avicenna does, or a real distinction between essence and existence, as Aquinas does, for Aristotle, forms also seem to exist qua particulars in particular sensible things, and this is sufficient for the mind to abstract, via the agent intellect, to a universal.

First of all, this is but *a* reading of Aristotle – far from being *the* reading. Yet, we do find some medieval scholars equating a Thomistic (or, in this case, also an Avicennian) reading of Aristotle with what Aristotle is actually saying. In the realm of contemporary scholarship in ancient philosophy, however, if one were to try to single out the most hotly debated question in Aristotle’s texts, his theory of forms certainly would be a contender. Indeed, essentially every possibility for the ontological status of forms is maintained by one scholar or another: (1) that forms are

universals, not particulars;<sup>134</sup> (2) that forms are particulars, not universals;<sup>135</sup> (3) that there is one kind of form which is particular and one kind which is universal;<sup>136</sup> and (4) that each form is both (or indeterminately) universal and particular.<sup>137</sup>

Now, to map these readings onto their medieval counterparts, we can see that Avicenna's view, if we take "forms" in this context to be "extra-mental forms," would be most similar to option (2). Forms outside of the mind only exist in sensible particulars and therefore are particular. When it comes to Aquinas now, I should be more precise in noting that Aquinas is in fact not himself so precise – at least not as precise as Avicenna. For Aquinas, here rather like Aristotle, it is somewhat unclear whether the extra-mental form is universal or particular – essentially falling best into position (4). We will discuss this, of course, in much more detail in the chapter on Aquinas, but here we can make a few preliminary comments. If one maintains that the extra-mental form is universal and is inherent in the particular thing – and this applies to Aristotle as much as to Aquinas – then one opens oneself up to the objection raised in the *Parmenides*, which we mentioned earlier. If one universal term is (literally) *in* the many, it is thereby made into many and is no longer one. Thus, a kinder reading of Aquinas would not attribute such a view to him. Aquinas could also very well have maintained position (4), that the extra-mental form is indeterminately universal and particular, but this is even more emphatically a bad position to maintain insofar as it is essentially self-contradictory, as the charge has been laid against Aristotle. It seems that Aquinas probably maintained a position most similar to (2), but he is not entirely clear on this point himself.

Bonaventure maintains, not surprisingly, none of these positions. At most, we can say he is a combination of positions (1) and (3). Since we have often taken recourse in our parallels to Duns Scotus, we can say that Duns Scotus would maintain the view more similar to a "pure" position (3), insofar as he maintains both a common nature and an individual form. Bonaventure likewise maintains a universal

<sup>134</sup> See, for example, G.E.L. Owen, "The Platonism of Aristotle," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 51 (1965): 136–137; and his "Particular and General," *PAS* (1978–79).

<sup>135</sup> Gail Fin, "Plato and Aristotle on Form and Substance," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society* 29 (1983): 23–47; and Jennifer Whiting, "Form and Individuation in Aristotle," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1986): 359–377.

<sup>136</sup> According to this reading, Aristotle uses form sometimes to refer to a universal species and sometimes to refer to an individual essence. See: J. Driscoll, "Eide in Aristotle's Earlier and Later Theories of Substance," in *Studies in Aristotle*, ed. D.J. O'Meara (Washington, DC: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1981), 129–59; Michael Loux, "Form Species and Predication in *Metaphysics Z, H, and Θ*," *Mind* 88 (1979), 1–23; Charlotte Witt, *Aristotle on Substance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1990); Alan Code, "The Aporetic Approach to Primary Being in *Metaphysics Z*," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Suppl. 10 (1984): 1–20.

<sup>137</sup> R.D. Sykes, "Form in Aristotle: Universal or Particular," *Philosophy* 50, no. 193 (1975): 311–331; and Charlotte Witt, *Aristotle on Substance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1990); as well as Michael Woods, "Form, Species, and Predication in Aristotle," *Synthese* 96, no. 3 (1993): 399–415. While Woods sees this position as a positive in Aristotle and uses it to respond to Loux, Sykes uses this reading to come to the conclusion that Aristotle's position is self-contradictory. Bonaventure comes to the conclusion that such a reading of Aristotle is incorrect precisely because it is self-contradictory.

and singular form, but he – unlike Scotus – explicitly says that the singular form is not really a form. Rather, only the universal is really a form. Thus, Bonaventure is introducing for the contemporary scholar of Aristotle a fifth option: Aristotle maintains that only universals are forms, but in order to resolve the issues raised against Platonic separate forms, he also posits a further principle, a particular “form.” The particularities of how Bonaventure draws this view out of Aristotle will, of course, be spelled out in chapters 4 and 6.

The question of which of these (now five) different, and indeed possible, views attributed to Aristotle is in fact the correct view is not mine to answer in this book. This discussion, however, should serve to highlight the great nuance to Aristotle’s own views, which lend themselves to such a wide variety of diverse (and *completely contradictory*) interpretations, such that it is difficult to say what in the history of philosophy, particularly what in the history of medieval philosophy, is and is not Aristotelian. Indeed, as we have seen, a strict mind-body dualism both is and isn’t Aristotelian; conceptualism both is and isn’t Aristotelian; a real distinction between essence and existence both is and isn’t Aristotelian; a plurality doctrine both is and isn’t Aristotelian; a unicity doctrine both is and isn’t Aristotelian, etc. Indeed, perhaps one of the few positive statements one can make about Aristotle is this: the set of texts which have come down to us and have been attributed to this “Aristotle” are certainly not a set of dogmatic views, to which one adheres and is thereby called “Aristotelian,” or to which one dissents and is thereby not called Aristotelian. Indeed, Avicenna, John de la Rochelle, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventure are all essentially Aristotelians – but they are Aristotelians of different kinds. My purpose in the coming chapters will be to highlight how Bonaventure makes use of Aristotle in a manner which is unique among his fellow medievals, not able to be reduced to that of Aquinas or of his Franciscan predecessors. Moreover, in doing so, I also wish to show how his interpretation and appropriation of Aristotle’s ontology is of particular importance – not only for its role in the development of medieval thought, but also for its potential import for contemporary efforts in interpreting these texts of Aristotle which, quite clearly from what we have seen above, have remained paradox-riddled from the Middle Ages up until today.

To bring now this section to a close, I would like to outline briefly the points which I think highlight Bonaventure’s philosophical thought as distinct from the thinkers which came before him in the Franciscan tradition and mark his thought primarily as Aristotelian instead of Avicennian – since that is our main alternative in this section.

1. Bonaventure’s view of substantial forms, which we can loosely characterize as a “plurality” of substantial forms, is supported by Aristotle’s texts – nowhere does Aristotle argue for a unicity doctrine. Thus, while being in accordance with Avicenna, Bonaventure’s view is developed by using Aristotle’s texts, not

Avicenna's. The view is thereby best characterized by the thought which informed it: Aristotle's.

2. Bonaventure's view of the unity of soul and body is emphatically different from Avicenna's, and from the earlier Franciscan thinkers, insofar as Bonaventure (a) does not maintain the strict soul-body dualism of Avicenna and (b) does not maintain a form of corporeity. Instead, he strikes a balance between Avicenna's and Aquinas' differing views, which is likewise proposed as being in fact a most likely view of Aristotle in contemporary scholarship. Thus, insofar as Bonaventure likewise is explicitly utilizing the thought of Aristotle in this context, there is no reason not to call it authentically an "Aristotelian" position.
3. Bonaventure's view of spiritual matter is utilized to resolve a problem in Aristotle's view of the soul and is used in a manner similar to contemporary scholarship on Aristotle. Thus, while the idea of "spiritual matter" is not *per se* Aristotelian, it is incorporated into an account of the soul which ultimately is Aristotelian.
4. Bonaventure's view of the ontological status of universal forms is developed, to a great extent, in response to the Avicennian indifference of essence. It is thereby emphatically not Avicennian, and insofar as it is indeed developed with references almost exclusively to Aristotle, there is, again, no reason not to characterize it as Aristotelian.





## CHAPTER 2

# THE THEORY OF FORMS IN THOMAS AQUINAS

Before turning our attention to the thought of Bonaventure, I would like to provide a contrast, an alternative route to the one we will see taken by Bonaventure – one which comes in the texts of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas provides us with a foil to what we will see in Bonaventure in two ways: (1) his notion of the ontological status of the forms generally speaking and (2) his use of both Aristotle and Augustinian/Neoplatonic influences in developing this notion.

With regard to the first point, while Bonaventure indeed seeks to maintain the equation of being and form, despite the difficulties involved, there is, of course, another option: simply to abandon such a commitment to this equation of form and being, in favor of a philosophy which would more plainly avoid any worries about mediation between forms and God, and one which wholly embraces the (more Augustinian) claim that, not the forms, but God is primary being. This is, of course, the option chosen by Aquinas.

The second contrast concerns Aquinas' "Aristotelianism," particularly with regard to hishylomorphism, which includes the position that the forms are ontologically dependent on their own composition in creatures. This naturally raises the question of what Aristotelianism was in the scholastic period. Indeed, the original division in scholarship, which we will examine and question further in the following chapters, was that among medieval philosophers there are Aristotelians and Augustinians. On this view, it would be correct, at least very generally speaking, to call Aquinas an "Aristotelian" – in the sense that Aquinas, like other medievals such as Albert the Great, embraces much of Aristotle's foundational metaphysics in developing his own. According to those who maintain this division between Aristotelians and Augustinians, Bonaventure, in contrast to Aquinas, more or less rejects Aristotle in favor of the traditional Augustinian/Neoplatonic system. While in the following chapters I highlight Bonaventure's use of Aristotle, in this chapter I would like to highlight the fact that Aquinas' Aristotelianism is but one option when it comes to interpreting Aristotle. In fact, as we will see, the foundational position in Aquinas' thought is one which is more explicitly found in Augustine than Aristotle: that God is primarily a principle of being – indeed, the claim that God is being for Aristotle we would attribute to an interpretation of Aristotle rather than to Aristotle himself. Thus, in Aquinas we find not a pure Aristotelianism, but one brand of medieval Aristotelianism which consists in a synthesis of a certain interpretation of Aristotle, which is brought into accord with the Augustinian notion of God, coupled with more traditional Christian sources.

Returning now to Aquinas' notion of the ontological status of the forms *per se*, most important for our discussion are the questions of (1) the ontological status of the forms, including how they are able to cause both sensible things and human knowledge; and (2) how the forms themselves are caused by God – precisely insofar as these are the two points which Bonaventure, in developing his own notion of forms, targets for critique of a position very similar to Aquinas'. Accordingly, I first of all discuss Aquinas' understanding of the composition of creatures and the ontological status of forms, as well as how Aquinas uses Aristotle's *Metaphysics* to support his positions. Here, I note what is perhaps the key problem with Aquinas' notion of extra-mental forms: that they, while not defined clearly either as universals or particulars, seem most likely to be the latter, a position which causes a number of problems, particularly with regard to human knowledge.

I then show how Aquinas' understanding of forms, coupled with his position that God is primarily a principle of being (along with other convertible terms, i.e. the transcendentals), shapes Aquinas' view of the causal relationship between God and creation. My purpose here is to inquire how God can be said to cause the forms, or the intelligibility of sensible things, particularly in light of Aquinas' commitment to the view that it is God, not the forms, who possesses being in the primary sense. Contrary to the position of some Thomists, I argue that there is no direct participation between creatures and God via the formal content of creatures to be found in Aquinas' thought – rather, there is only participation within the order of being, leaving unclear where the intelligibility of creatures comes from. I proceed by examining three key places in Aquinas' corpus where scholars look for evidence of a direct causal link between creatures and God via formal content: (1) the (brief) discussions of participation in the *Commentary on Boethius' De Hebdomadibus* and the *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, (2) the argument for the existence of God in the Fourth Way, and (3) his (notably sparse) references to exemplar causes.

Ultimately, I wish to highlight the two main issues which Bonaventure, and indeed later thinkers such as Ockham, would find with Aquinas' account of the relationship between forms and being: (1) the claim that forms are not being in themselves (since that is what God is) and are rather ontologically dependent upon the composite, which makes it difficult to see how the forms can be the causes either of sensible things or of human knowledge; and (2) that this claim results in an unsurpassable divide between God and creation within the order of essence/form, insofar as God, as a principle of being, cannot be said to cause the forms themselves directly but can only cause the fact that the forms happen to exist in this or that sensible thing. This is not to say that these problems could not be addressed by Aquinas, but rather that these are the weak spots in his account which a fellow scholastic thinker would target – as we indeed will see Bonaventure himself do in the following chapters.

## 1. THE STRUCTURE OF CREATION

To begin with a position in Aquinas which is well known: for Aquinas, each creature is composed of form and matter.<sup>138</sup> Form and matter come together to form a single hylomorphic composite (i.e. a substance).<sup>139</sup> For Aquinas, it is the composite which is substance and which exists, not the forms. He writes: “[S]o the essence, according to which, a thing is called a being, cannot be either the form alone or the matter alone, but both.”<sup>140</sup> The forms certainly do not appear to have any kind of Neoplatonic transcendence of being in themselves; rather they exist only as part of a composite.

Yet, Aquinas goes on to say that, while not existing in itself, the “form alone is in its own way the cause of this being [i.e. the being of the composite].”<sup>141</sup> What does Aquinas mean when he says that the form alone does “in its own way” cause existence? Does he intend, after all, some kind of ontological priority here such as we find in the Neoplatonists? No, indeed. While the role of forms, for Aquinas, is to “make things actual,”<sup>142</sup> this is not to say that forms are actualities unto themselves. Aquinas calls forms “actualizations or acts” not in the sense of having their own act of existence, apart from the composite, but in the qualified sense that they are necessary for the composite to be actually. The forms themselves are only actualized when they enter into composition: “[E]ven though form is not separable and a particular thing, it nevertheless becomes an actual being by means of the composite itself.”<sup>143</sup> The form is what allows a particular cat to become an actual cat, and in this sense forms are called “acts” – but the form cat does not exist as an actuality independent from the composite, i.e. the form does not have any ontologically prior actuality in itself. Here, Aquinas draws a clear distinction between form and actuality, or form and being.

This brings us to Aquinas’ distinction between form and being, i.e. his essence/existence distinction. Aquinas’ stance on this point is made most clear in a context perhaps odd to the modern reader: his response to the question of whether angels have a material component. For Aquinas, angels exist as pure intelligences (i.e. pure forms), not as composites of form and matter. Perhaps we might think that angels,

---

<sup>138</sup> I am assuming this is already known by the reader, but I am summarizing these points because we will see Bonaventure argue against positions similar to those of Aquinas regarding the composition of creatures.

<sup>139</sup> *DEE* I.6 (p. 33 of Maurer’s translation). Here we are referring to material substances, not angels or God.

<sup>140</sup> *DEE* II.3 (p. 36). “Unde oportet quod essentia, qua res denominatur ens, non tantum sit forma neque tantum materia, sed utrumque....”

<sup>141</sup> *DEE* II. 3 (p. 36). [continued from note above] “... quamvis huiusmodi esse suo modo sola forma sit causa.”

<sup>142</sup> *DPN* I.17-18 (pp. 80-81). “Et quia forma facit esse in actu, ideo forma dicitur esse actus.”

<sup>143</sup> *In Meta.* VII.1293 (p. 437 in Rowan’s translation). “Forma autem, etsi non sit separabilis, et hoc aliquid, tamen per ipsam compositum fit ens actu, ut sic possit esse separabile, et hoc aliquid.”

lacking materiality and being pure forms, would also be pure being and pure actuality. To the contrary, Aquinas asserts: “Substances of this kind, though pure forms without matter, are not absolutely simple; they are not pure act but have a mixture of potentiality.”<sup>144</sup> Were angels pure actualizations, they would simply be God – since God alone is pure act. Thus, while not combined of form and matter, they rather are combined of being and form: “But there is in them a composition of form and being. That is why the commentary on the Book of Causes says that an intelligence is that which has form and being; and by form is here understood the quiddity itself or simple nature.”<sup>145</sup> And again: “[The being of intellectual substances] is other than their essence, though their essence is without matter.”<sup>146</sup> Something can be pure form without being pure existence or without being pure actuality – here, the decisive break with Neoplatonism! For Aquinas, all substances (except God) acquire their existence from another. Forms in themselves, rather, only have the *potentiality* for existence. Aquinas writes: “Everything that receives something from another is potential with regard to what it receives, and what is received in it is its actuality. The quiddity or form, therefore, which is the intelligence, must be potential with regard to the being it receives from God, and this being is received as an actuality.”<sup>147</sup> The question now is: from where does the form acquire *esse*, existence? And the answer: from God, who is pure *esse* and pure actuality.

With this distinction between essence and existence, we can see even more clearly that the form, for Aquinas, is not sufficient for giving being to the composite. For, as we see above, the form has no existence to give.<sup>148</sup> While a heart is necessary for a human being to exist actually, it does not give a human being existence in the first place: one’s parents do this. Similarly, while the form is necessary for the substance to exist actually, it does not confer being itself to the substance; rather, God does this as he is the first cause of being.

This hylomorphism in Aquinas, as we will see, is very different from the reading which Bonaventure will provide. Indeed, while Bonaventure takes Aristotle to mean that the forms themselves are what exist (i.e. have *esse*), Aquinas takes quite the opposite to be the case. While we will leave the task of examining how Bonaventure

---

<sup>144</sup> DEE IV.6 (p. 55). “Huiusmodi ergo substantiae quamvis sint formae tantum sine materia, non tamen in eis est omnimoda simplicitas nec sunt actus purus, sed habent permixtionem potentiae.”

<sup>145</sup> DEE IV.2 (pp. 52-53). “Unde in anima vel in intelligentia nullo modo est compositio ex materia et forma, ut hoc modo accipiatur essentia in eis sicut in substantiis corporalibus, sed est ibi compositio formae et esse. Unde in commento IX propositionis libri de causis dicitur quod intelligentia est habens formam et esse, et accipitur ibi forma pro ipsa quidditate vel natura simplici.”

<sup>146</sup> DEE V.4 (p. 62). “Secundo modo invenitur essentia in substantiis creatis intellectualibus, in quibus est aliud esse quam essentia earum, quamvis essentia sit sine materia.”

<sup>147</sup> DEE IV.8 (p. 57). “Omne autem quod recipit aliquid ab alio est in potentia respectu illius, et hoc quod receptum est in eo est actus eius. Oportet ergo quod ipsa quidditas vel forma, quae est intelligentia, sit in potentia respectu esse, quod a Deo recipit; et illud esse receptum est per modum actus.”

<sup>148</sup> An exception to this would be the form of the human soul, which does have being independently of the body. See, for example, the position developed in *Quaestiones de anima*, q. 1.

draws his reading out of Aristotle for our later chapters, let us here look at how Aquinas develops his reading.

While someone of a Bonaventurian mindset would see Aristotle's claim that substance (taking substance to mean "form") possesses separability and individuality<sup>149</sup> as indicating an ontological priority of the forms, Aquinas rather qualifies this claim with respect to the forms: "[E]ven though form is not separable and a particular thing, it nevertheless becomes an actual being by means of the composite itself; and therefore in this way it can be both separable and a particular thing"<sup>150</sup> – i.e. *as* a particular sensible composite. The form's "separability" (or better, "independence") thus is not as form *per se* but only insofar as the form is part of the composite substance, which is to say that form, at its core, has no ontological independence from the composite.

Aristotle's further remark that it is the form which is the primary substance is then interpreted by Aquinas as referring only to forms of artefacts, not of natural things<sup>151</sup> – in the sense that the forms of artefacts have a primary existence in the mind of the artisan. Aquinas writes: "[Aristotle] also calls this the 'first substance', i.e. the first form; and he does this because the form present in the matter of things made by art proceeds from the form present in the mind."<sup>152</sup> Nevertheless, Aquinas makes clear, "in the case of natural things, the opposite is the case"<sup>153</sup> – i.e. natural forms exist in and dependent upon the matter from which, in turn, they are abstracted by a mind which knows them. It is perhaps ambiguous in the text whether Aristotle's remark is to be applied only to the forms of artefacts or extends to natural forms as well – particularly since Aristotle himself does not provide us with the caveat to his remark as Aquinas does.

Again, when Aristotle identifies the forms with actuality,<sup>154</sup> which also seems to imply an ontological priority of form, Aquinas finds a way to circumvent this conclusion: "[A] thing's substance or form or specifying principle is a *kind* of actuality; and from this it is evident that actuality is prior to potency in substance or form."<sup>155</sup> Here, Aquinas first of all equates form with a "specifying principle" (i.e. the prin-

<sup>149</sup> *Meta.* VII.1 1028a13, VII.3 1029a27. "For it is accepted that separability and individuality belong especially to substance." It is interesting however that Aquinas takes it for granted that the substance which is separable and individual in this passage is the forms – the easier way to take it is simply as referring to sensible composites (or God), asserting that they are separable and individual.

<sup>150</sup> *In Meta.* VII.1293 (p. 437). "Forma autem, etsi non sit separabilis, et hoc aliquid, tamen per ipsam compositum fit ens actu, ut sic possit esse separabile, et hoc aliquid."

<sup>151</sup> *Meta.* VII.7 1032a32-1032b6.

<sup>152</sup> *In Meta.* VII.1404 (p. 468). "Et hoc etiam nominat primam substantiam, idest primam formam. Et hoc ideo, quia a forma quae est in anima nostra, procedit forma quae est in materia in artificialibus; in naturalibus autem e contrario."

<sup>153</sup> *In Meta.* VII.1404 (p. 468). "... in naturalibus autem e contrario."

<sup>154</sup> *Meta.* IX.8 1050a3-4. "... evidently, therefore, substance or form, is actuality."

<sup>155</sup> *In Meta.* IX.1866 (p. 617). "...dicens, quod manifestum est ex praedictis, quod substantia et forma et species est actus quidam. Et ex hoc manifestum est, quod actus est prior quam potentia secundum substantiam et formam."

ciple which designates the species of the composite, for example, as the form of cat designates a cat as a cat). Secondly, Aquinas designates the form as a “kind” of actuality, meaning that the form is not actuality per se, but that it is actuality only in the sense of being the specifying principle of a composite within that composite. For Aquinas, it is clear that form is not itself actuality; rather, actuality is distinct from and “prior to potency” in form – the form possesses potency and hence is actuality only in a derivative sense. This is all to say, calling the form the actuality of the sensible composite has little ontological weight: the form does not *actually* exist independently of the composite and so properly speaking it is not actuality in itself. It just happens that whenever a particular exists actually, it has finally become whatever the form has designated it to be. Indeed, this undermines the claim to a great extent that forms are in any real sense the causes of sensible things. A cause has to be ontologically prior to its effects but on Aquinas’ account the forms are quite plainly ontologically posterior. While they are necessary parts of the composite, their existence is wholly dependent on the composite.

The next question to ask is whether for Aquinas these forms are individual or whether they are universal. This is not, however, a question with a simple and clear answer, for Aquinas’ notion of universals is to a great extent a disputed issue among scholars. Brian Leftow writes:

... to Copleston, [Aquinas] is a resemblance-nominalist; to Armstrong, a “concept nominalist”; to Edwards and Spade, “almost as strong a realist as Duns Scotus”; to Gracia, Pannier, and Sullivan, neither a realist nor nominalist; to Hamlyn, the Middle Ages’ “prime exponent of realism” ...; to Wolterstorff, just inconsistent.<sup>156</sup>

It is fair, however, to say that Aquinas does not maintain that universal forms have an existence in themselves, independent from their composition in sensible things. Does this mean that universals qua universals exist *in* particulars? Probably not.<sup>157</sup> It rather seems that Aquinas wishes to say that only individual forms (i.e. particularized universals) exist. Nevertheless, his position is at least a conceptualism (or a nominalism less “austere” than Ockham’s), insofar as from this individual form we can abstract to universal forms, which exist only in the mind (i.e. as concepts).

This, however, was considered by many scholastic thinkers to be far from a satisfactory answer to the problem of universals. To Ockham, both the position that the universal itself exists in the sensible (which does not seem to be Aquinas’ position) as well as the position that only a particularized/individualized form exists in the composite, from which we abstract to a universal (which does seem to be Aquinas’

<sup>156</sup> Brian Leftow, “Aquinas on Attributes,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 11 (2003): 1–41.

<sup>157</sup> In certain places Aquinas very explicitly denies that universals exist anywhere outside of the mind. In other places he is more unclear as to whether the forms of things are universal or individual. The clearest place where Aquinas seems to indicate that forms are individual is when he argues that angels are pure form – if forms were universal, this would be incoherent since *one* angel cannot itself be a universal.

position), are positions which may be easily dismissed: universals cannot exist in particulars since something cannot be both universal and particular at once, and an individual form is insufficient for abstraction to the universal.<sup>158</sup> Bonaventure himself will make arguments to a very similar effect, as we will see in chapter 4, targeting the following two questions which are left somewhat unanswered in Aquinas' account: (1) if the forms have no ontological standing in themselves (i.e. as actuality) and are not in any way prior to the sensible thing, how can they be said to be the cause of any sensible thing? and (2) if they are particular, how can they ground knowledge of universals?

## 2. PARTICIPATION

Given that Aquinas does not consider universals in themselves to have being independent of the composite in which they are instantiated, what becomes of his understanding of participation? Due to the fact that Aquinas often seems vague on exactly what he means when he discusses participation and that his use of the word "participation" itself is rather sparse, the concept of participation in Aquinas' philosophy has been the subject of much debate in secondary scholarship. Accordingly, in this section I discuss not only Aquinas' own texts pertaining to the concept of participation but also contemporary commentators on this concept in Aquinas, in order to argue for my own position, namely that there is no way to skirt around the impossibility in Aquinas' thought of a direct participation of creatures in God via their intelligible nature, as some scholars have attempted to do.

In his commentary on Boethius' *De Hebdomadibus*, Aquinas provides his most detailed account of participation. Aquinas defines participation quite succinctly in the following way: "For 'to participate' is, as it were, 'to grasp a part.'"<sup>159</sup> He continues to say that when a creature "receives in a particular way that which belongs to another in a universal way, it is said 'to participate' in that, as human being is said to participate in animal because it does not possess the intelligible structure of animal according to its total commonality; and in the same way, Socrates participates in human."<sup>160</sup> Aquinas then notes that creatures can be something either through their essence (*per essentiam*), i.e. simply having an essence, or through participation (*per participationem*). Furthermore, he asserts that "to be *per essentiam* and *per participationem* are opposites."<sup>161</sup> In the first case, *per essentiam*, a cat can be a cat

<sup>158</sup> There is much more to both of these arguments, which we will address in chapter 4. I am assuming that the reader, however, is fairly familiar with Ockham's objections to Aquinas. See: *Ordinatio* I, d. 2, q. 7 and 8.

<sup>159</sup> *BDH* II.70 (p. 18). "Est autem participare quasi partem capere."

<sup>160</sup> *BDH* II.70 (p. 18). "Et ideo quando aliquid particulariter recipit id quod ad alterum pertinet universaliter, dicitur participare illud, sicut homo dicitur participare animal quia non habet rationem animalis secundum totam communitatem; et eadem ratione Socrates participat hominem."

<sup>161</sup> *BDH* III.40 (p.32). "... in ista quaestione supponitur quod aliquid esse per essentiam et per participationem sunt opposta."



only if it possesses the essence of cat, and thus it is a cat through its essence, *per essentiam*. Here, we may note that for a Neoplatonist of course a cat is a cat rather *per participationem*.

Now let us look more closely at what Aquinas means when he says that creatures can be something *per participationem*. Regarding *per participationem*, Aquinas provides us with three different cases. Generally, in the secondary literature, the first two are either grouped together<sup>162</sup> or separated out into two different types of participation,<sup>163</sup> while the third is universally treated as a type of participation unto itself. The first case of participation is universally acknowledged to be a “logical participation.” Aquinas gives as examples of this logical participation: man participates in animal, and Socrates in man.<sup>164</sup> This is to say, a species participates in the wider genus, and a particular participates in a species. Scholars have called this distinction merely logical, as opposed to real, due to the fact that Aquinas, with his notion of immanent forms, doesn’t consider a species or genus to have any independent existence, e.g., animality as a universal exists only insofar as it is in particular animals. Cornelio Fabro explains this point: “[A]s far as their *ontological* content is concerned, genera and species are present in their respective subjects and must therefore be predicated essentially (*secundem [per] essentiam*) and not by participation (*per participationem*)” – this Fabro attributes to Aquinas’ appropriation of the “Aristotelian doctrine of immanence.”<sup>165</sup> This is to say, for Aquinas, man is animal *per essentiam* ontologically, because the species animal is really present in and dependent upon him. However, logically, one may also say that man “participates” in animal because man is “participating” in a name which we give to many different creatures. In this way, logical participation and being something *per essentiam* may work in conjunction with one another. When only an object’s intelligible content is considered, i.e. when the object is considered logically not ontologically, species (such as man) may at the same time be said to “participate” in genera (such as animal), or particulars (such as Socrates) may be said to participate in species (such as man). Yet, ontologically speaking, Socrates is animal or man *per essentiam*, because the forms of animal and man are present in him and in this sense, he does not participate in them.

The position that this type of participation is only logical also makes sense of a claim which Aquinas makes in his *Commentary on the Metaphysics* and which seems to contradict what he says in his *De Hebdomadibus*: “Man is animal essen-

<sup>162</sup> For example, Fabro and Geiger.

<sup>163</sup> For example, Wippel and Doolan.

<sup>164</sup> *BDH* II.70 (p. 18).

<sup>165</sup> Cornelio Fabro, trans. B. M. Bonansea, “The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 27, no. 3 (1974): 471. Here, Fabro is of course assuming a more Thomistic reading of Aristotle.

tially, not merely something participating in animal.<sup>166</sup> Didn't Aquinas clearly state in his *De Hebdomadibus* that to be something by essence and to be something by participation are opposites? Then how can man be an animal by essence and participation? In order to make sense of these two seemingly contradictory statements, it must be that the participation to which Aquinas refers in the *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, i.e. man participating in animal, is only a *logical* participation – in which sense *per participationem* is not opposite to *per essentiam*, for in the one sense we are speaking logically and in the other ontologically. Socrates participates in man *logically* but is man *ontologically* (i.e. through his essence).

Turning now to Aquinas' second type of participation, we find this one to be not merely logical but real or ontological.<sup>167</sup> Aquinas illustrates this second type of participation by giving the examples of a subject participating in an accident and matter participating in form. This second type of participation is very similar to the first (leading some to group the two together),<sup>168</sup> and in fact, Aquinas himself seems almost to equate the two, writing: "Socrates participates in man [i.e. the first type of participation]. Similarly, a subject participates in accident and matter in form [i.e. the second type of participation]...."<sup>169</sup> The distinction between the first and the second cases of participation is that in the second matter *really* receives a form and a substance *really* receives an accident; while, in the first case, humanity doesn't really receive animality (because neither humanity nor animality have existence in themselves), or Socrates doesn't really receive humanity (rather, he simply is humanity *per essentiam*) – we only speak of the latter two examples as being cases of logical participation.

The third type of participation is also understood as real and is markedly different from the first two, inasmuch as Aquinas explains it as an effect participating in its cause. This relationship of participation is that of beings (*entia*) participating in being (*esse*),<sup>170</sup> i.e. creatures participating in God. This is the most important type of participation for our purposes in this chapter since it, like Neoplatonic participation, concerns the relationship between effect and cause.

---

<sup>166</sup> *In Meta.* VII.1328 (p. 445). "Homo enim est animal essentialiter, non solum aliquid animalis participans. Homo enim est quod verum est animal."

<sup>167</sup> See: John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2000), 98. See also: Gregory Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2008), 198.

<sup>168</sup> We will discuss more precisely why they are grouped together momentarily.

<sup>169</sup> *BDH* II.70 (p. 18). "... Socrates participat hominem; similiter etiam subiectum participat accidens, et materia formam...."

<sup>170</sup> Gregory Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2008), 199. For a more detailed exposition of this concept, see: John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being for Uncreated Being* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2000), 98–104.

Let us, then, look more in depth at how scholars have interpreted this case of participation and its relationship to the others. Fabro combines the first two cases of participation into one, calling them both “predicamental-univocal participation”; Aquinas’ third case, i.e. between cause and effect, he calls “transcendental-analogical participation.”<sup>171</sup> Of predicamental-univocal participation, Fabro writes: “[A]ll the participants have in themselves the same formality according to their essential content and the participated does not exist in itself, but only in the participants (an Aristotelian moment in Thomistic participation).”<sup>172</sup> In grouping the first two cases of participation together, as they both concern the formality of a substance, Fabro’s predicamental participation can be either ontological or logical; for Fabro, when participation refers to participation in essence (such as Socrates in man), it is logical, but when it refers to an accident participating in a subject or matter in form, the participation is ontological.

Furthermore, Fabro calls predicamental participation in Aquinas univocal because the participant (e.g., cat) entirely possesses the participated (e.g., the white) as part of its own existence; there is only one way in which white-ness exists, as part of a substance, e.g., in a cat. Thus, predicamental-univocal participation allows us to make a univocal predication: the cat is white. Logical predicamental-univocal participation, e.g., Socrates participating in man, also, quite clearly, allows a univocal predication: Socrates is a man. For Fabro, the ontological/logical distinction matters less than the point that both of these cases of participation admit of *univocal* predication – and this is why he groups the first two types of participation together, and it is what distinguishes them from the third.

Fabro considers Aquinas’ third case of participation, i.e. an effect participating in its cause, to be “the strongest meaning of participation”<sup>173</sup> insofar as it concerns not just predication but the very cause of the existence of creatures. Fabro explains this type of participation in the following way: “[P]articipants have in themselves only a «similitudine degradata» of the participant which subsists in itself, outside of them....”<sup>174</sup> This type of participation is clearly analogical because the participated is shared by all the participants according to their differing degrees and is not entirely possessed by any one of the participants. Fabro is clear here that this second type of

---

<sup>171</sup> Cornelio Fabro, *La Nozione Metafisica di Partecipazione Secondo S. Tommaso D’Aquino* (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1950), 317. “*predicamentale-univoco*” e “*transcendentale-analogo*.” (my translation)

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. 317-318. “... nel primo tutto i partecipanti hanno in sé la stessa formalità secondo tutti il suo contenuto essenziale ed il partecipato non esiste in sé, ma solo nei partecipanti (momento aristotelico della partecipazione tomista)” (my translation).

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. “il significato più forte di partecipazione.”

<sup>174</sup> Cornelio Fabro, *La Nozione Metafisica di Partecipazione Secondo S. Tommaso D’Aquino*, (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1950), 318. “... nel secondo invece i partecipanti non hanno in sé che una «similitudine degradata» del partecipato che sussiste in sé, al di fuori di essi, o come proprietà di un sussistente superiore o senz’altro come formalità pura e sussistente nella piena possessione di sé.”

participation does not mean that we consider, for example, cats as participating in varying degrees in the form of cat-ness. Rather, this participation is the way in which beings (*entia*) participate in *esse*. A cat participates more or less in *esse*, the more or less it *exists*; its formal content is not the concern of this type of participation – at least on Fabro’s reading. Fabro further makes clear how this type of participation is dependent on a real distinction between essence and existence, as well as the composition of the two in creatures. He writes: “[S]ince the essence of a creature has also its own participated act of being (*actus essendi*), its actualization is not merely a relation of extrinsic dependence; rather, it is based on the act of *esse* in which it participates and which it preserves within itself and is the proper terminus of divine causality.”<sup>175</sup> This is to say, creatures participate in God because God is present to and in them, insofar as they exist, via their *esse*.<sup>176</sup>

Louis-Bertrand Geiger, however, provides a much more Platonic reading of participation in Aquinas’ thought. Like Fabro, he divides participation into two kinds which he calls “participation by composition” (i.e. the first two cases given by Aquinas) and “participation by similitude or formal hierarchy” (i.e. the third case).<sup>177</sup> Participation by composition “is founded essentially on the duality of a subject which receives and an element which is received.”<sup>178</sup> Here Geiger says, “One may define [participation by composition] in the following way: participation is the *reception*, by a subject playing the role of matter, and consequently the *possession* of an element, playing the role of form.”<sup>179</sup> This account of the first kind of participation is similar to Fabro’s, except that Geiger stresses that this participation, insofar as it involves composition, results in limitation. In this case, for example, an already existing cat receives the form of white-ness, and in doing so, it limits the form of white-ness within itself.

Geiger grounds his second kind of participation, referring to Aquinas’ example of the relationship between cause and effect, in the unequal statuses of perfections within the *essences* of creatures – here is where Geiger sees a Platonic participation

---

<sup>175</sup> Cornelio Fabro, trans. B. M. Bonansea, “The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 27, no. 3 (1974): 480–481.

<sup>176</sup> Nonetheless, despite the fact that there is no participation in the order of form, Fabro considers Aquinas’ concept of participation as being in continuity with Platonic participation, inasmuch as it still involves imitation of the object in which things participate, i.e. participation involves “harmony as «εἰκῶν», «μίμησις» which was present already in later Plato, and which Saint Thomas found supported by the continuing speculation of Neoplatonism, and of Saint Augustine in particular.” Cornelio Fabro, *La Nozione Metafisica di Partecipazione Secondo S. Tommaso D’Aquino* (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1950), 318. “...intesa come «εἰκῶν», «μίμησις», che era presente già nell’ultimo Platone, e che S. Tommaso trovava avvalorata dalla speculazione successiva del Neoplatonismo e di S. Agostino in particolare.”

<sup>177</sup> Louis-Bertrand Geiger, *La Participation dans la Philosophie de S. Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1942), 27–28. “participation par composition” et “participation par similitude ou par hiérarchie formelle” (my translation).

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 27. “... se fonde essentiellement sur la dualité d’un sujet récepteur et d’un élément reçu...”

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 28. “On peut définir de la manière suivante: la participation est la réception et conséquemment la possession d’un élément, jouant le rôle de forme, par un sujet le rôle de matière.”

in Aquinas' thought. He explains: "[P]articipation expresses the status, diminished, particularized, and, in this sense, participated, of an essence each time that it is not realized in the absolute plenitude of its formal content."<sup>180</sup> The essences of things imitate in different degrees their object of imitation (pure *esse*) and thus more or less participate in it. This results in a more primary limitation in beings within their very essences because this limitation allows the subject to exist in the first place. Geiger considers that his first notion of participation, participation by composition, only accounts for limitation involving subject and accident. Thus, a prior method of limitation, participation by "similitude or formal hierarchy," is necessary to account for there being a subject in the first place which may then take on further composition. The subject must already exist in a certain way as a limitation of God's *esse*, i.e. by having an essence. For example, a cat must already exist as a cat, as a limitation of *esse*, before it can be termed a white cat or a brown cat or a tall cat or a small cat, etc.

Of this primary limitation within the order of being, Geiger writes: "[T]he essence that participates in existence is itself a participation in the First Perfection of which it may give only a limited and fragmentary aspect."<sup>181</sup> This is all to say that before there can be any kind of composition in a subject, there must be a certain way for this subject to exist, "the way it exists" being its essence. Furthermore, in order for this essence to come about, it must participate in perfection (i.e. being), of which it has only a small aspect, of which it is a limitation.<sup>182</sup> For Geiger, participation in the most important sense is thus essence participating in *esse* because essence is the limitation of *esse*, i.e. *esse* in only one particular way.

The key point of distinction, then, between Geiger and Fabro is their respective understandings of the way in which they account for limitation among existing things, which then leads them to have different understandings of Aquinas' third case of participation, i.e. between cause and effect. Geiger accounts for the primary limitation in beings by looking to participation by similitude (i.e. essences more or less achieving a likeness to God's perfection), while Fabro looks simply to the composition of essence and existence within a creature, with the existence alone of the creature participating in God's *esse*. While Geiger still does certainly maintain a distinction between essence and existence and a necessary composition of the two in all creatures, he doesn't consider it sufficient for limitation; rather, creatures are limited most directly and primarily by the fact that they are participants through their essence in God's *esse*, i.e. while God is being itself, creatures are only being in a certain specific way, i.e. respective of their essence.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 29. "La participation exprime l'état diminué, particularisé, et, en ce sens, participé, d'une essence chaque fois qu'elle n'est pas réalisé de son contenu formel."

<sup>181</sup> Louis-Bertrand Geiger, *La Participation dans la Philosophie de S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1942), 469. "... l'essence qui participe à l'existence est elle-même une participation de la Perfection Première, dont elle ne donne qu'un aspect limité et fragmentaire."

<sup>182</sup> Geiger seems to be missing the fact that before something can be in a particular way (i.e. have an essence), it needs simply to be in the first place.

However, Fabro (rightly) considers Geiger's position to be a threat to Aquinas' claim that there is a real distinction between essence and existence: Geiger seems to be too closely equating essence and existence, insofar as he considers that participation of a creature's essence in being (*esse*) is primary – as opposed to Fabro's assertion that it is the creature's being which participates in being, not the creature's essence.<sup>183</sup> Perhaps Geiger is reading a bit too much Neoplatonism into Aquinas by saying that it is the essences of creatures which participate most directly and most primarily in being, thereby narrowing the distinction between essence and *esse*. It seems that on Geiger's reading, if the essence primarily participates in *esse*, the essence itself would acquire a primary existence in relation to the composite – it seems now that the forms would have a kind of existence as limitations of being, in a way similar to the ontological status of the forms in a Neoplatonic system.

However, even if we take Geiger's position not to undermine Aquinas' essence/existence distinction, he still has not quite managed to retain a Neoplatonic participation via the essences of things as we have seen in the Christian Neoplatonists – for Aquinas, essences participate in God, even on Geiger's reading, only insofar as they *exist*, not *what they exist as*. To put this into Geiger's language of limitation: essences are a limitation, but of what? Of *esse*, and it is this relation to *esse* which causally links them to God, not their limitation per se. The form of cat, even on Geiger's reading, only participates in being not in its own pre-contained existence in God, as Dionysius would have it.

To entertain now a third interpretation, John F. Wippel considers that Geiger and Fabro's positions may be brought into harmony with one another. He agrees with Fabro on the point that there must be a composition of *esse* and *essentia* to account for limited instantiations of *esse* in creatures, the *esse* which then participates in God's *esse*, i.e. transcendental-analogical participation. However, Wippel also grants to Geiger that participation by similitude ensures the limitations which account for the essences of creatures, in the sense that each creature imitates God's essence (his *esse*) in a particular way, i.e. through its essence as a limitation of God's being. Thus, with respect to Aquinas' notion of participation between cause and effect, Wippel maintains that both "transcendental-analogical participation" and "participation by similitude or formal hierarchy" may be found in Aquinas' philosophy. However, according to Wippel, Aquinas' theory of participation stresses the former over the latter because the former more clearly shows the causal relationship of creatures to God. Wippel writes: "Creatures actually exist because God wills them to exist and efficiently causes them. But God can will a creature of a certain kind to exist only if it can exist. And it can exist only if it is viewed by God as a

---

<sup>183</sup> See Cornelio Fabro, trans. B. M. Bonansea, "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation," *The Review of Metaphysics* 27, no. 3 (1974): 469. For Fabro's response to Geiger, see: Cornelio Fabro, *Participation et causalité selon s. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Editions Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1961), 63–73.

possible way of imitating the divine essence.”<sup>184</sup> This is to say, first of all, that God wills into being those creatures which can imitate him, and thus the primary sense in which he causes creatures is that he causes their existence. Then, secondarily, insofar as a creature exists as this or that, i.e. as a possible way of imitating God, it can be said that the essence participates in God’s existence. Essences certainly have some kind of existence insofar as they are part of creatures (otherwise Aquinas would be a nominalist), and so they must in some way, albeit secondarily, due to their dependence on the creature, also participate in God’s being. Thus, while granting that forms can in this highly qualified sense participate in God, Wippel can avoid Geiger’s claim that the forms *primarily* participate in God’s being, which would make the forms far too Neoplatonic, verging on the claim that they have an existence unto themselves apart from the composite. Rather, creatures more primarily participate in God by the very fact that they exist (their *esse*) and, secondarily, by the particular way in which they exist (their essence).

Wippel makes this last point clear: “To this I would add, in order to forestall any possible misunderstanding, that this is not to imply that the creaturely essence enjoys any actual reality in itself apart from the divine essence prior to its actual creation in an existing entity together with its corresponding act of being.”<sup>185</sup> To put a bit more stress on this point for our purposes in this chapter: respective of what Aquinas writes about participation, essences only participate in God insofar as they exist; they do not participate in God qua essence, but rather qua part of an existing creature. This is to say, participation, whether through the *esse* or the essence of a creature, for Aquinas, is always participation in God’s being and thus ultimately confined to the order of *esse*.

### 3. PARTICIPATION IN THE FOURTH WAY?

Granted that Aquinas’ (very brief) discussions of participation in the *Commentary on Boethius’ De Hebdomadibus* and the *Commentary on the Metaphysics* do not provide us with a participation via the order of essence, perhaps his discussion of God’s causality in the Fourth Way does. Here, we are turning to the Fourth Way in particular because many scholars have singled out the Fourth Way as a place where Aquinas seems to imply participation in God via the very forms of things – insofar as the Fourth Way is “based on the grades [i.e. of perfection] found in things.”<sup>186</sup>

The starting point for Aquinas’ argument here is the question: Why are some things better and truer and more perfect than others? There must be something which is the best, most true, and most perfect. For Aquinas, whatever is the best,

<sup>184</sup> John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2000), 131.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> *ST I*, q. 2, a. 3, p. 14. “Quarta via sumitur ex gradibus qui in rebus inveniuntur.” Translations of *ST* are my own.

most true, and most perfect, is that which is the most “fully in being”<sup>187</sup> – here an equation of being and perfection. Indeed, whatever exists fully as being “causes [being] in others” just as fire, the hottest thing, “causes all other things to be hot.”<sup>188</sup> That which causes being (and goodness and perfection) in all other things is God. In this way, we move from seeing relative perfection in things to the claim that there is one perfection (i.e. God), just as we move from seeing relative hotness in things to the claim that there is one source of hotness (i.e. fire).

Does this not bring to mind Geiger’s account of participation which was likewise based on the relative perfection of things with regard to their formal content? Or, as van Steenberghen, sounding very Neoplatonic, writes of the Fourth Way: “Among the imperfections which we discern in the universe, there are some which are possessed by different degrees, all limited. This ordering of limited perfections implies a reference to absolute perfections: this is the principle of participation.”<sup>189</sup> Indeed, van Steenberghen is correct: here, we come upon participation in Aquinas’ thought, a point which van Steenberghen explicitly ties to the Neoplatonic influence of Dionysius and the *Liber de Causis*.<sup>190</sup> However, unlike the participation of the Neoplatonists, this participation does not occur between sensibles and forms, and in turn between forms and God, but directly between sensibles and God. Thus, the relationship is Neoplatonic structurally, but our terms have been reshuffled: forms are not principles of being – they have been replaced with one, and only one, principle of being, God.

In the Fourth Way, as we saw above, there is one cause of being in things which exist, just as there is one cause of heat in things which are hot. Immediately we can see that because Aquinas is looking for one cause of being, participation in essences which would amount to a real Neoplatonic participation is not going to be found in the Fourth Way. The point of the Fourth Way is to identify the cause of being certainly not with a plurality of essences or forms, but with one God of being – this being the way in which Aquinas “proves” God’s existence.

We can further see that Aquinas’ mentioning of relative perfections does not refer to participation via essence. Doolan, for example, rightly points out that these

---

<sup>187</sup> *ST I*, q. 2, a. 3, p. 16. “Est igitur aliquid quod est verissimum et optimum et nobilissimum et per consequens maxime ens...”

<sup>188</sup> *ST I*, q. 2, a. 3, p. 16. “Quod autem dicitur maxime in aliquo genere est causa omnium quae sunt illius generis, sicut ignis qui est maxime calidus est causa omnium calidorum, ut in eodem libro dicitur.” For the reference Aquinas is making to Aristotle, see *Meta.* IV. 3 (1005b11) and *Post. An.* I.10 (76b23).

<sup>189</sup> “Parmi les perfections que nous discernons dans l’univers, il en est qui sont possédées à des degrés divers, tous limités. Cet étagement de perfections limitées implique référence à des perfections absolues, à des maxima absolus: c’est le principe de participation.” Fernand van Steenberghen, “Prolégomènes à la quarta via,” *Rivista di filosofia Neo-Scholastica* 70 (1978): 114.

<sup>190</sup> Fernand van Steenberghen, “Prolégomènes à la quarta via,” *Rivista di filosofia Neo-Scholastica* 70 (1978), 112. Cornelio Fabro makes a similar but less forcefully Neoplatonic claim that there is a notion of participation at work in the Fourth Way: “Sviluppo significato e valore della IV Via,” *Doctor Communis* 7 (1954): 71–109. Gregory Doolan also sees evidence of participation (particularly of participation in exemplars which we will discuss soon) in the Fifth Way. See: Gregory Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2008), 79–80.



relative perfections mentioned in the Fourth Way do not refer to “comparing individuals within a species but instead, one type of being with another type of being,” and thus, “something cannot be, for example, more or less a triangle, an animal, or a man.”<sup>191</sup> This is to say, the comparison which Aquinas is discussing in the Fourth Way is a broader sense of “comparison,” not one which would ground the objective ranking of things of the same kind, i.e. with regard to their intelligible content.

When I rank things of a kind, I have to rank them with reference to the form of the kind, i.e. the perfection of the kind. An example of this would be: “Verdi is better than Puccini.” When I make the statement that Verdi is better than Puccini, I do this with reference to the form, “composer” – and I make a judgment with reference to the intelligible content that Verdi is closer to that form, closer to the perfection “being a composer.” When, however, I compare Verdi with a spider, I refer not to a form because they are not of the same kind – rather, I compare Verdi to the spider only with reference to goodness itself. The key distinction between these two kinds of comparisons concerns the standard according to which I make the comparison. When I compare two composers (e.g., Verdi and Puccini), I compare them with reference to a standard which is a form. However, when I compare Verdi with a spider, I am comparing the act of existence of a man with the act of existence of a spider, and I can do this only with reference simply to the act of existence: being, or goodness itself (i.e. God). It is this second type of comparison on which Aquinas rests his argument in the Fourth Way, not the first. Indeed, Aquinas indicates quite clearly the cause which he is discussing, i.e. that which would ground these comparisons, is rather that which “causes ... the perfections which [creatures] have”<sup>192</sup> (i.e. their forms) – God is not the perfections (i.e. forms) but the cause of the perfections.

If Aquinas were referring to the first type of comparison, i.e. comparing particulars against a form, we might have our link to a notion of participation via essence. Yet, the only reference point which Aquinas provides us with is being, and thus we can find only the comparison between the “acts of existences” themselves (e.g., man and spider) not the comparison between particulars (e.g., this man and that man).<sup>193</sup> Thus, it is clear that Aquinas builds his argument in the Fourth Way on the notion that kinds of things are better or worse the more or less they share a likeness to or, rather, participate in that principle of goodness, but a goodness which is equated only with being – that which is best and most perfect: God. The forms do not come into play here as being standards for perfection.

---

<sup>191</sup> Gregory Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2008), 67. Doolan, however, also tries – albeit in a different way – to assert a kind of participation in God via the formal content of things, as we will see in the next section.

<sup>192</sup> *STI*, q. 2, a. 3, p. 16. “Ergo est aliquid quod est causa esse et bonitatis et cujuslibet perfectionis in omnibus rebus, et hoc dicimus Deum.”

<sup>193</sup> Hence, any such comparisons between particulars with regard to their intelligible content would not have this ontological weight of being grounded in God, but would be merely logical.

Moreover, Aquinas reinforces the position that God is being/goodness and thereby causes goodness only with reference to the existence/actuality of his effects: "Being, as we understand it here, signifies the highest perfection of all: and the proof is that act is always more perfect than potentiality. Now no signate form is understood to be in act unless it be supposed to have *being*... Wherefore it is clear that *being* as we understand it here is the actuality of all acts, and therefore the perfection of all perfections."<sup>194</sup> Here, clearly the perfection with regard to the formal content of things does not concern form qua form, but form qua its existence. Perfection in Aquinas' thought does not refer to any kind of formal or intelligible perfection, but rather simply to the actualization of being – furthermore, being which is *really* distinct from essence/form. Thus, when Aquinas speaks of God as the perfection or goodness of every creature, he is doing so in the sense that God is the immediate cause of *being* in every creature, not of the creature's being this or that (i.e. with respect to its essence/form).

#### 4. PARTICIPATION IN EXEMPLAR CAUSES?

The reading of Aquinas which I have been arguing for thus far may sound, however, like God is merely some general source of being without any connection to or knowledge of the formal aspect of his creation. We find such a notion in some Islamic philosophers who maintain that God causes only one general creature and then in turn all distinctions between creatures – i.e. the plurality of different forms in the natural world – are caused by secondary causes.<sup>195</sup> Such indeed is not the case for Aquinas. We now must clarify how, for Aquinas, all the distinctions between creatures come from, i.e. are caused by, God. In order to cause creatures, God must have knowledge of them. Thus, for God, there is a plurality of divine ideas, or exemplars. Aquinas writes: "In the Divine Mind there are exemplar forms of all the creatures, which are called ideas, as there are forms of artefacts in the mind of an artisan."<sup>196</sup>

In this chapter, I have been trying to show that for Aquinas the connection between God and his creation is limited to the order of existence. However, it may seem that Aquinas' notion of exemplars provides a path to understanding a relationship between God and his creation also through the order of essences – this is to say, while a creature's intelligible content does not participate in God himself, it nonetheless participates in an exemplar in God's mind. It is interesting, however, to note that not until more recent scholarship on Aquinas was this doctrine of divine exemplars

---

<sup>194</sup> *QDP* q. 7, a. 2, p. 12. "Quaelibet autem forma signata non intelligitur in actu nisi per hoc quod esse ponitur. Nam humanitas vel igneitas potest considerari ut in potentia materiae existens, vel ut in virtute agentis, aut etiam ut in intellectu: sed hoc quod habet esse, efficitur actu existens. Unde patet quod hoc quod dico esse est actualitas omnium actuum, et propter hoc est perfectio omnium perfectionum."

<sup>195</sup> For example, Avicenna.

<sup>196</sup> *Quodl.* 8, a. 2, p. 301. "Respondeo dicendum, quod in mente divina sint omnium creaturarum forme exemplares, quae ideae dicuntur, sicut in mente artificis formae artificatorum."

paid much attention. This is due to the fact that Aquinas himself almost nowhere mentions the exemplars or exemplar causation. Gilson observes: “[I]t is hardly an exaggeration to say that at the bottom everything St. Thomas said about the Ideas was in his view one more concession made to the language of a philosophy that was not really his own” – i.e. it was conceded to the authority of Augustine and Dionysius.<sup>197</sup> Gilson’s position, accordingly, is that there is nothing more than the customary nod to exemplarism in Aquinas, and that exemplarism essentially plays no central role in his wider metaphysics. Contrary to this, scholars such as Doolan have attempted to show that Aquinas does indeed have a well-developed doctrine of exemplar causation. Here, I do not wish to argue whether or not this doctrine is central or even really part of Aquinas’ thought, but only that whatever Aquinas is developing that may look like exemplar causation is not going to provide a direct participatory link between God and the formal content of creatures – this is to say, it will be entirely different from the doctrine of exemplar causation which we will see in Bonaventure.

Let us then look at what (little) Aquinas himself says about exemplars. As an exemplar is a cause, that which an exemplar causes participates in the exemplar. Aquinas uses the image of an artisan and the artefact to illustrate the relationship between the exemplar and that which it causes. An artisan has in his mind a preexisting idea of the artefact which he then uses to create the artefact itself. For example, a carpenter has in his mind the idea of a house. He then builds a house according to this idea. Aquinas writes: “[A]n artisan produces a determinate form in matter by reason of the exemplar before him, whether it is the exemplar beheld externally or the exemplar conceived in the mind.”<sup>198</sup> Just as the artefact receives a form, so do all things in nature: “this determination of forms must be reduced to the divine wisdom as its first principle, for the divine wisdom devised the order of the universe, which order consists in the variety of things.”<sup>199</sup> Thus, just as there is an exemplar for the artefact in the artisan’s mind, so are there exemplars in God’s mind which “are not apart from the divine essence.”<sup>200</sup> To these exemplars, creatures then bear a likeness, although “not as a man begotten is like the man begetting”<sup>201</sup> but “as they (i.e. creatures) represent the divine ideas as the material house is like the house in the architect’s mind.”<sup>202</sup> In this sense, God is an exemplar cause.

<sup>197</sup> Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 103.

<sup>198</sup> *ST I*, q. 44, a. 3, p. 16. “Artifex enim producit determinatam formam in materia, propter exemplar ad quod inspicit, sive illud sit exemplar ad quod extra intuetur, sive sit exemplar interius mente conceptum.”

<sup>199</sup> *ST I*, q. 44, a. 3, p. 16. “Haec autem formarum determinatio oportet quod reducatur, sicut in primum principium, in divinam sapientiam, quae ordinem universi excogitavit, qui in rerum distinctione consistit.”

<sup>200</sup> *ST I*, q. 44, a. 3, p. 16. “... tamen non sunt realiter aliud a divina essentia...”

<sup>201</sup> *ST I*, q. 44, a. 3, p. 18. “... ut homo genitus homini generanti...”

<sup>202</sup> *ST I*, q. 44, a. 3, p. 18. “Similitudinem secundum repraesentationem rationis intellectae a Deo, ut domus quae est in materia, domui quae est in mente artificis.”

For Aquinas, moreover, the divine exemplars are not separate from God, just as we saw the forms or primordial causes are not distinct from God for Dionysius. Aquinas reasons for this unity between God and the exemplars, however, in a wholly different manner than we saw in our discussion of Dionysius. Dionysius establishes the existence of the forms in God as the forms are effects of God pre-contained in God, their cause. Aquinas, however, approaches this question by reasoning about God as an intellect which knows the forms. Aquinas considers that for an intelligible to be in act, it must be known by an intellect. Conversely, for an intellect to be in act, it must know its object.<sup>203</sup> If the ideas were outside of God's mind, neither the ideas nor God would be in act. The ideas, then, must be within and one with the mind of God: "[T]he divine intellect understands by no species other than the divine essence ... nevertheless, the divine essence is the likeness of all things."<sup>204</sup> The divine intellect thus thinks itself, which generates an understanding of itself – this understanding which God has of himself is "the likeness not only of God himself understood, but also of all those things of which the divine essence is a likeness."<sup>205</sup> Aquinas continues: "In this way, therefore, through one intelligible species, which is the divine essence, and through one understood *intention*, which is the divine Word, God can understand many things."<sup>206</sup>

"Intention" is the key word here. The use of the word "intention" means that God does not contain in his mind the *real* being of the forms in which particulars participate. This would be altogether too Platonic and would violate Aquinas' own position that there is a real distinction between essence and existence. The forms are not being, but are distinct from being – God alone is being. Hence, the forms exist in the mind of God not as ontologically one with God but only as *intentional* being.<sup>207</sup> Thus, as Clarke writes: "[T]he divine ideas are now only the 'signifying signs of things' (*intentiones rerum*), not things themselves; their being is *esse intentionale*

---

<sup>203</sup> SCG I, c. 51.6 (p. 186 of Pegis' translation). "Furthermore, the intelligible in act is the intellect in act, just as the sensible in act is the sense in act. According as the intelligible is distinguished from the intellect, both are in potency, as likewise appears in the cause of the sense." "Adhuc. Intelligibile in actu est intellectus in actu: sicut et sensibile in actu est sensus in actu. Secundum vero quod intelligibile ab intellectu distinguitur, est utrumque in potentia, sicut et in sensu patet..."

<sup>204</sup> SCG I, c. 53.5 (p. 189). "Intellectus autem divinus nulla alia specie intelligit quam essentia sua, ut supra ostensum est. Sed tamen essentia sua est similitudo omnium rerum."

<sup>205</sup> SCG I, c. 53.5 (p. 189). "Per hoc ergo sequitur quod conceptio intellectus divini, prout seipsum intelligit, quae est verbum ipsius, non solum sit similitudo ipsius Dei intellecti, sed etiam omnium quorum est divina essentia similitudo." Clearly this recalls Aristotle's *Nous* which thinks itself. See *In Meta.* 2614 (p. 828).

<sup>206</sup> SCG I, c. 53.5 (p. 186) (emphasis added). "Sic ergo per unam speciem intelligibilem, quae est divina essentia, et per unam intentionem intellectam, quae est verbum divinum, multa possunt a Deo intelligi."

<sup>207</sup> The topic of intentionality in Aquinas is one of much study in secondary literature. It is not necessary to go into the details of the position here. For an overview, see: J. Brower and S. Brower-Toland, "Aquinas on Mental Representation: Concepts and Intentionality," *The Philosophical Review* 117, no. 2 (2008): 193–243.

not *esse naturale* or *reale*.<sup>208</sup> Furthermore, Clarke aptly points out that “this crucial distinction between *esse intentionale* and *esse naturale*, in terms of which alone the doctrine makes sense, is the one piece that has been conspicuously missing from the entire Platonic tradition....”<sup>209</sup>

What this comes down to is that when God conceives of his own divine essence, he is conceiving only of his own being. Aquinas writes: “But the divine essence comprehends within itself the nobilities of all beings not indeed compositely, but ... according to the mode of perfection. Now every form falls short of its perfection.”<sup>210</sup> This means that, despite Aquinas’ notion of exemplars, there is no *real* connection between the essences in the natural world and God via these exemplars; the only *real* connection, yet again, is to be found within the order of *esse*. Aquinas makes it quite clear that God understands the multiplicity of forms only “by understanding his essence (i.e. being) as imitable [in a multiplicity of ways].”<sup>211</sup> Again, Aquinas writes: “[T]hese ideas though multiplied *by their relations to things*, in reality are not apart from the divine essence, according as the likeness to that essence can be shared diversely by different things.”<sup>212</sup> There is only a multiplicity of ideas because there are multiple ways in which God’s essence (i.e. being) may be imitated. For Aquinas, the “multiplicity” of exemplars is merely the “manifold imitability in the divine essence according to the fulness of its perfection” (i.e. the fullness of its being).<sup>213</sup> As Wippel explains: “The notion that a divine idea expresses God’s understanding of his essence as imitable is crucial, just as is the point that the divine essence is imitated in different ways by different creatures....”<sup>214</sup> If we consider God’s relationship to the multiplicity of his creation, there are many divine ideas; yet if we consider God’s knowledge of himself from God’s perspective, leaving creation out of it, there is but one idea. And this idea is of being.

Here, we can see quite clearly the difference between Aquinas’ notion of ideas in the mind of God and what we discussed in Dionysius. For Dionysius, God “knows” the forms in the sense that the forms are pre-contained in God as an effect

---

<sup>208</sup> Norris Clarke, “The Problem of Reality and Multiplicity of Divine Ideas in Christian Neoplatonism,” in *The Creative Retrieval of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2009), 122.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> *SCG I*, c. 54.4 (p. 188). “Divina autem essentia in se nobilitates omnium entium comprehendit, non quidem per modum compositionis, sed per modum perfectionis, ut supra ostensum est. Forma autem omnis, tam propria quam communis, secundum id quod aliquid ponit, est perfectio quaedam: non autem imperfectionem includit nisi secundum quod deficit a vero esse.”

<sup>211</sup> *SCG I*, c. 54.4 (p. 188). “Intellectus igitur divinus id quod est proprium unicuique in essentia sua comprehendere potest, intelligendo in quo eius essentiam imitetur, et in quo ab eius perfectione deficit unumquodque....”

<sup>212</sup> *ST I*, q. 44. a. 3, p. 16. “Quae quidem, licet multiplicentur secundum respectum ad res, tamen non sunt realiter aliud a divina essentia, prout eius similitudo a diversis participari potest diversimode.”

<sup>213</sup> Gregory T. Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2008), 86.

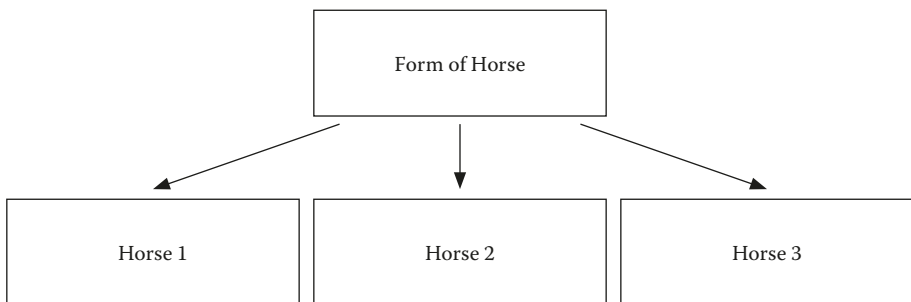
<sup>214</sup> John F. Wippel, *Thomas Aquinas on the Divine Ideas* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1993), 9.

is pre-contained in its cause – this signifying the real being of the natural forms within God. And this is all possible, as we have seen, because God is beyond being and can thereby contain the real being of the forms. For Aquinas, however, God is conceived more explicitly as an intellect which has knowledge, and in order to preserve God’s simplicity, God must know one thing: himself – and he is being. Accordingly, the natural forms can have only an intentional being in God’s mind.

Thus, even those who wish to defend the presence of a doctrine of divine exemplars in Aquinas’ thought must admit, as Doolan himself does “... that Thomas himself does not appear to have referred to created essence as being a ‘participation.’”<sup>215</sup> Moreover, Doolan further concedes: “The divine ideas, therefore, are not themselves participated but are rather *participabilities* of that likeness as known by God, that is, his knowledge of the way in which his essence can be participated by creatures.”<sup>216</sup>

## 5. CONCLUSION

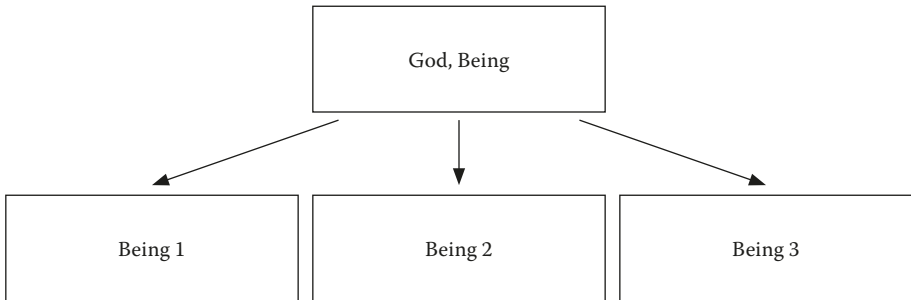
By way of conclusion, we can first of all return to our theme of Augustinianism vs. Aristotelianism. From the above, we can see that the position that God is a principle of being is primarily an Augustinian position – while Aristotle, of course, asserts that God is goodness and actuality itself, it is Augustine who makes explicit that God is likewise being itself. Moreover, this position is quite clearly in opposition to the Neoplatonic claim that God is beyond-being. Nevertheless, we see a significant influence of Neoplatonism on Aquinas – here, by way of the basic structure of participation between creatures and God. This is to say, the causal relationship between God and creatures is Neoplatonic in the sense that what God causes bears a similitude to him and thereby “participates” in him – i.e. God is being itself, and he causes beings which are similar to him and thereby participate in his perfect, transcendent being. However, while in the Neoplatonists this schematic was applied to the forms, in Aquinas’ system it is applied to God. To compare, the Neoplatonic system functions in the following way:



<sup>215</sup> Gregory Doolan, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2008), 239.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

Aquinas' system, structurally similar, functions in the following way, but with God taking the place of the "one" over the many:



This understanding of participation, however, as we have seen, leads to the question in Aquinas of why and how there are many different kinds of beings, not only many different beings. In a Neoplatonic system, a form is only able to make what it is – the form of horse makes horses, and the form of tree makes trees – while Aquinas' God, the "form" of being, is only capable of making beings, irrespective of their kind.

This system in Aquinas – while bearing a structure similar to a Neoplatonic relationship of participation, coupled with an Augustinian notion of God as being – is fleshed out with Aquinas' reading of Aristotle. Here, I stress that Aquinas' reading of Aristotle is indeed just that: a reading, not *the* reading. This point will become more apparent when we see yet *another* reading: that of Bonaventure.

Indeed, much of what will shape Bonaventure's understanding of the forms, as well as his wider ontology, is the dissatisfaction with both the Neoplatonic tendency to separate the forms from sensible things, as well as with a medieval reading of Aristotle's forms such as we see in Aquinas. And he is understandably dissatisfied: if one wants to defend a realism, Aquinas' has left too many fronts undefended, i.e. the claim that the forms are ontologically dependent on their compositions is inconsistent with the claim that they can ground human knowledge, while the claim that God is being is inconsistent with the claim that he can directly cause the formal content of his creation. Indeed, these are the two fronts which Bonaventure will try to cover in his own understanding of forms, along with the way in which they are caused by God – as we will see in the following four chapters.

CHAPTER 3  
THE CONTROVERSY:  
BONAVENTURE AND ARISTOTLE

1. HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP ON BONAVENTURE

Before I begin to examine Bonaventure's texts, I would like to make a few preliminary remarks about the ways in which scholars have tried to characterize Bonaventure's thought, particularly with regard to the question, which we saw come up in the previous chapter, about the relationship between Augustinianism and Aristotelianism. While we saw in Aquinas a good amount of Neoplatonic influence, notably in the relationship between God and creatures via the transcendentals, he is nevertheless accepted at least in some respect as being an Aristotelian – he embraces hylomorphism, Aristotelian causation, act and potency, etc.

The question of Bonaventure's relationship to Aristotle and the traditional Augustinian sources, however, is far from clear cut. Throughout the 1940s to the 1970s, there was a flurry of scholarship around the question of whether or not Bonaventure's thought should be characterized as Aristotelian or Augustinian.<sup>217</sup> Earlier than this, from the later 1800s moving forwards, the consensus was that Bonaventure, and to an even greater extent his student, John Peckham, were anti-Aristotelian – despite the fact that many of these claims were made either before or just as the critical editions of Bonaventure's *opera* were becoming available, and there were no critical editions of John Peckham's work at all.<sup>218</sup>

---

<sup>217</sup> For a very good summary of the history of scholarship on medieval scholasticism, specifically on the relationship between Bonaventure and Aquinas, as well as Gilson's role in shaping the narrative, see: John Inglis, *Spheres of Philosophical Inquiry and the Historiography of Medieval Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill 1998). See especially his chapter on Gilson, 193–214.

<sup>218</sup> Here I refer to the originator of the division between "Augustinian" and "Aristotelian," Franz Ehrle, whose categorization of medieval philosophers and characterization of John Peckham as anti-Aristotelian occurred in 1889. See: Franz Ehrle, S.J., "Beiträge zur Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Scholastik 11, Der Augustinismus und der Aristotelismus in der Scholastik gegen Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts," *Archiv für Literatur und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* 5 (1889): 603–635; and his: "John Peckham über den Kampf des Augustinismus und Aristotelismus in der zweiten Hälfte des 13 Jhdts.," *Zeitschrift für katholischen Theologie* 13 (1889): 172–193. Bonaventure's *opera* were published between 1882 and 1902. Peckham's *Commentary on the Sentences* is yet to be published in critical edition, and the only edition (not critical) of a purely philosophical work of Peckham was published in 1928 (P. Ferdinand and M. Delorme, eds. *Studi Francescani* vol. XIV, numero 4, Ottobre-Dicembre 1928). Also to note, the second book of Peckham's *Commentary on the Sentences* is missing, so Ehrle would not have had that either to consult. It is to be noted that the two opposing groups, in Ehrle's view, are neither strictly Augustinian nor Aristotelian, respectively. For Ehrle, the Augustinians do appropriate some concepts which resemble those of Aristotle, but Aristotle's influence is minor, and they ultimately reject Aristotle's philosophy. Crowley rightly points out that Ehrle's division is an oversimplification. Crowley summarizes the commonly held position, evident in Ehrle's writings, that Aquinas' interpretation of Aristotle is more accurate than that of the "Augustinians": "the [Aristotelian school] had the



What is also interesting is that this anti-Aristotelian claim, particularly against Peckham, seems to have resulted *primarily* from a historical account of a dispute between Peckham and Thomas Aquinas regarding the eternity of the world, in which Peckham takes the (supposedly) anti-Aristotelian position that the temporal beginning of the cosmos can be demonstrated. The content of Peckham's arguments is more or less the same as Bonaventure's well-known arguments against this "Aristotelian" position, e.g., the impossibility of traversing and ordering the infinite. Because this issue about the eternity of the world was taken to be so central, the conclusion was that if Bonaventure and Peckham argue against this Aristotelian position, they must to a certain extent be opposed to the philosophy of Aristotle generally speaking. To be sure, Bonaventure, however, is often treated with more kindness and less negativity than Peckham is – as Callus puts it, while "St. Thomas has been characterized as the architect of one of the most perfect philosophical syntheses," Bonaventure is "one of the most lovable figures in the whole history of mediaeval thought."<sup>219</sup>

However, of course, basing this conclusion that Bonaventure and Peckham are anti-Aristotelian on their arguments against the eternity of the world seems unsatisfactory insofar as this dispute concerns only one topic, and still more so insofar as this conclusion was based in historical accounts of events and not texts. Indeed, when one examines the texts, as we will in this chapter, one finds that Bonaventure's arguments against the eternity of the world are, in fact, derived from Aristotle's own texts – particularly *De Caelo* and the *Metaphysics* – and he explicitly states that he thinks Aristotle would more likely agree with him than not on this question.

After these characterizations were made, further study of Bonaventure's (although not Peckham's)<sup>220</sup> texts did occur thanks to the critical editions becoming

---

advantage in that its assimilation of Aristotle was more unified and systematic, and this was due to the surpassing genius of St. Thomas Aquinas." See: Theodore Crowley, O.F.M., "John Peckham, O.F.M., Archbishop of Canterbury, Versus the New Aristotelianism," *T. Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 33, no. 2 (1951): 242–255. Crowley targets the essays of Knowles, Callus, and Mandonnet as other examples of a simplistic Augustinian vs. Aristotelian understanding of the debates of the thirteenth century. See: M.D. Knowles, "Some Aspects of the Career of Archbishop Peckham," *The English Historical Review* Ivii (1942): 1–18, 178–201; Daniel Callus, O.P., *The Condemnation of St. Thomas at Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1946); P. Mandonnet, O.P., "Siger de Brabant et l'averroïsme latin au XIII<sup>e</sup>me siecle," in *Les Philosophes Beiges* vi–vii (Louvain: Institut supérieur de philosophie de l'université, 1908–11). Crowley nevertheless still does not consider Peckham to be in any sense an "Aristotelian."

<sup>219</sup> I think the correct phrase with which to characterize Callus' account is "damning with faint praise." Daniel Callus, "The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure and of St. Thomas," *New Blackfriars* 21, no. 240 (March 1940): 151. "Lovable" is indeed an interesting word to use of someone who most likely died from having been poisoned due to his unpopular political positions, as is maintained by Bonaventure's secretary, Peregrinus of Bologna.

<sup>220</sup> Evidence of how understudied Peckham's works are is that in scholarship on Peckham's *opera* there is no discussion of a curious manuscript attributed to Peckham: a full-length commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics* (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Conv. Soppr. G.IV.853). The manuscript is very clearly listed under Peckham's name in the indices at Biblioteca Nazionale Central Firenze, as well as in modern reconstructions of the Santa Croce library, and is included as *contesté* in Palémon

available. Thus, in the early twentieth century, we have a number of scholars who made the first attempts at opening up Bonaventure's thought to a more textually engaged study. What one would hope to find is a moderation of the older view of Bonaventure, but instead we find a strengthening of it, most particularly in Etienne Gilson. To his credit, Gilson is careful not to thomisticize Bonaventure as was the trend among some later scholars, such as John Francis Quinn, who deny Bonaventure's more un-Thomistic positions (e.g., plurality of substantial forms) in order to bring harmony between Bonaventure and Aquinas.<sup>221</sup> Gilson does not concern himself with harmony. Amidst sly remarks about Bonaventure's convoluted method of argumentation,<sup>222</sup> Gilson paints a picture in which Bonaventure was more or less opposed, not only to Aristotle but to pagan philosophy in general. But *especially* to Aristotle. According to Gilson, while Aquinas saw the wisdom of eating Aristotle and "digesting" him,<sup>223</sup> Bonaventure did not deign to partake of this meal.

The basis for Gilson's position is that he considers Bonaventure, unlike Aquinas, to reject not only Aristotle but the entire project of philosophy as separate from theology. Therefore, Bonaventure, according to Gilson, cannot admit of any non-Christian philosophers – hence, his philosophy must be Augustinian at its foundation. While it is true that Bonaventure does not separate theology from philosophy, Gilson's conclusion does not necessarily follow. In fact, one could take the opposite position: while Bonaventure does not separate the two, he also does not make one subordinate to, or the "handmaiden" of the other, as Aquinas does.

---

Glorieux, *Repertoire des maîtres en théologie de Paris* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1933), 88. The manuscript is also listed in the reconstructions of the original convent libraries completed under the direction of Guido Biagi, as having been housed in the Santa Croce library. The reconstruction tells us that Peckham's commentary on the *Ethics* was kept alongside of Aristotle's collected works until the convent libraries were closed in the nineteenth century. *Rivista delle biblioteche e degli Archivi* (Venice-Florence: Libreria antiquaria editrice Leo. S. Olschki, 1985), Vols. VIII-X.

<sup>221</sup> In fact, much of Quinn's book is devoted to comparing Bonaventure and Aquinas, where he often reaches the conclusion that their positions are similar. To very un-Thomistic positions, such as the seminal reasons, he devotes only sporadic comments, amounting, in the case of seminal reasons, to a full two pages.

<sup>222</sup> An example: "There, where the reader expects syllogisms and formal demonstrations, Saint Bonaventure does not offer anything but correspondences, analogies, and conveniences, which hardly satisfy, and which seem on the contrary however to satisfy him entirely. Images clutter together in his thought and rise up one after the other indefinitely, evoked by an inspiration whose logic escapes us, to such a point that Neo-scholastic philosophers and theologians nowadays leave him quite happily to return to the succinct and clear expositions of Saint Thomas" (my translation). "Là où le lecteur attend des syllogismes et des démonstrations en forme, saint Bonaventure ne lui offre le plus souvent que des correspondances, des analogies, des convenances dont on a peine à se satisfaire, et qui semblent au contraire les satisfaire profondément. Les images se pressent dans sa pensée, se suscitent indéfiniment les unes les autres, évoquées par une inspiration dont la logique nous échappe, à tel point que même les philosophes néo-scolastiques et les théologiens d'aujourd'hui quittent volontiers la partie pour revenir aux exposés dépouillés et lucides de Saint Thomas." See: Etienne Gilson, *La Philosophie de Saint Bonaventure* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1924), 196.

<sup>223</sup> "... but it is true that [Aquinas] has, so to speak, absorbed Aristotelianism, then digested it and finally assimilated its substance within its own personal thought." Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952), 70.

As van Steenberghen writes, addressing Gilson: “St. Bonaventure never condemned philosophy nor did he affirm that human reason without faith was destined to err in all domains. On the contrary, he always recognized and emphasized the value of the usefulness of philosophy.”<sup>224</sup>

Nevertheless, for Gilson, if we are to identify Bonaventure with one of the pagan schools of thought, it is the Platonists whom Bonaventure is happy to incorporate into his thought, however, of course, by way of Augustine.<sup>225</sup> Gilson, accordingly, reduces Bonaventure’s notion of forms to being analogous to Platonic ideas (a position which Bonaventure explicitly rejects in the *Commentary*).<sup>226</sup> Accordingly, Bonaventure, on Gilson’s reading, approves of the Neoplatonists, insofar as they are “the philosophers who discovered exemplarism....”<sup>227</sup>

Here, it is good to mention, as van Steenberghen points out, that effectively all of Gilson’s textual evidence for this claim that Bonaventure is anti-Aristotelian is derived from the *Collationes* – “his university sermons preached from 1267 to 1273, at the most disturbed period of doctrinal struggle.”<sup>228</sup> These sermons were written during a period in which the use of Aristotle’s texts was coming into question, i.e. a time when anyone at the University of Paris would have presented themselves as lukewarm towards Aristotle – particularly someone with the political savvy of Bonaventure. However, as we discussed in the introduction (and will discuss further in this chapter), the supposed “critiques” of Aristotle are not really of Aristotle himself, but either of certain interpreters of Aristotle (as is the case for the eternity of the world and the unity of the intellect), or of a very specific facet of Aristotle’s thought. The supposed critique of Aristotle’s rejection of Platonic forms is not really targeting the fact that Aristotle rejects Platonic forms, but that he rejects the transcendent forms of virtues, which Bonaventure considers need to exist in God himself.<sup>229</sup> This is to say, when one looks more closely, Bonaventure indeed places caveats on his assessments of Aristotle to exclude Aristotle himself. The Bonaventure whom we encounter in the *Collationes* is not, as – for example – Gilson presents

---

<sup>224</sup> Fernand van Steenberghen, *The Philosophical Movement in the Thirteenth Century* (Belfast: Nelson, 1955), 68.

<sup>225</sup> Etienne Gilson, *La Philosophie de Saint Bonaventure* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1924), 98.

<sup>226</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, pp. 17b-18a.

<sup>227</sup> Etienne Gilson, *La Philosophie de Saint Bonaventure* (Paris, J. Vrin, 1924), 100. “... les philosophes qui ont découvert l’exemplarisme et affirmé la réalité des idées étaient des illuminés.” Bonaventure, as we will discuss in the following section of the present chapter, does not really believe Augustine when he says that Plato and Plotinus’ ideas are like divine exemplars. *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 17b.

<sup>228</sup> Fernand van Steenberghen, *The Philosophical Movement in the Thirteenth Century* (Belfast: Nelson, 1955), 59.

<sup>229</sup> *Hex.* VI.2-7. Indeed, Aristotle is not his opponent regarding the question of the eternity of the world, and that he is right to deny Platonic forms. In the *Commentary*, Bonaventure moreover notes that Augustine thinks that Platonic forms are like divine ideas, but Bonaventure himself does not think so. *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 17b.

it, someone who is hostile towards Aristotle, but only someone who is not overtly enthusiastic about defending Aristotle.<sup>230</sup>

Van Steenberghen's own view towards the relationship between Bonaventure and Aristotle was, to the horror of Gilson,<sup>231</sup> that Bonaventure's philosophy (not his theology, obviously) is at its base Aristotelian, not Augustinian. For van Steenberghen, Bonaventure's philosophy is not even – as some have maintained (and asserted against van Steenberghen) – a benign synthesis of Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism (which ultimately ends up being more or less an Augustinianism). To pacify his opponents, van Steenberghen concedes that at most one can call Bonaventure's philosophy "Augustinian Aristotelianism" or "Neoplatonic Aristotelianism" – yet, the emphasis is clearly on *Aristotelianism*.

There were a number of different reactions to these highly polarized positions of van Steenberghen on the one side and Gilson on the other, all of which attempted to moderate these extremes. In Robert, Roch, Bougerol, and Quinn,<sup>232</sup> we find a middle ground which leans towards Gilson, i.e. the willingness to concede that Bonaventure uses *some* Aristotle and has no real antagonism towards Aristotle, but that Aristotelianism is not the real foundation of his thought. In Boehner and Cullen,<sup>233</sup> we find the position which leans rather slightly more towards van Steenberghen, i.e. that Bonaventure sees himself, particularly with reference to the nature of the forms, as synthesizing Platonism, or Neoplatonism, with Aristotle – of course, by way of Augustine.

Another category are those who maintained, against van Steenberghen, that even if we grant that Bonaventure is influenced by Aristotle, the "spirit" of Bonaventure's philosophy is nevertheless Augustinian.<sup>234</sup> This was perhaps the easiest opposition for van Steenberghen to dismiss by responding that this point is more or less ir-

---

<sup>230</sup> While the *Collationes* does not make much mention of forms – which is, on my reading, the aspect of Bonaventure's philosophy which is most Aristotelian – we nevertheless see Bonaventure's Aristotelianism seeping in. For example, his discussion of virtue and vice makes constant use of Aristotle – and indeed he names him a number of times in this discussion. *Hex.* V.1-17. He likewise uses him for considerations such as motion and the structure of the physical cosmos (*Hex.* IV.17) as well as for teaching grammar and argumentation (*Hex.* IV.19-23).

<sup>231</sup> See: Gilson's review of van Steenberghen's *Siger de Brabant d'après ses oeuvres inédites* in *Bulletin Thomiste* VI (Jan. 1940–Oct. 1942): 5–22.

<sup>232</sup> Patrick Robert, "St. Bonaventure, Defender of Christian Wisdom," *Franciscan Studies* III (March 1943): 159-179; Robert Roch, "The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure – A Controversy," *Franciscan Studies* 19 (1959): 209–226; Jacques-Guy Bougerol, *Introduction à l'étude de Saint Bonaventure* (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1961); John F. Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure's Philosophy* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973).

<sup>233</sup> Philotheus Boehner, *The History of the Franciscan School: John of Rupella and Saint Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1943); Christopher Cullen, *Bonaventure* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010).

<sup>234</sup> Léon Veuthey, "Les divers courants de la philosophie augustino-franciscaine au moyen âge," in *Scholastica ratione historico-critica instauranda*, Acta Congressus Scholastici Internationalis Rome (1951), 627–52; Simon Brounts, "Siger van Brabant en de wijsgeerige stroomingen aan de Parijssche Universiteit in de XIIIe eeuw," *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie* VIII (1946): 442–66.

relevant for the study of Bonaventure's *philosophy*. It is obvious that the "spirit" of Bonaventure's philosophy would be Augustinian, but so would the spirit of Aquinas' philosophy – we are dealing with two saints, after all. With regard to their philosophy, however, it makes little sense to appeal to the spirit of their thought. As van Steenberghen writes: "[W]hen isolated from theology by effort of reconstruction, it is no more than a rational system, of which it is difficult to say that it has any spirit at all...."<sup>235</sup> It would be as if one said that Kant's *philosophy* is based entirely on the thought of Luther, simply because Kant himself is a Protestant and has as his goal a philosophy which should work within a Protestant worldview.

In the face of the many critiques and qualifications of van Steenberghen's position which preferred to say either that Bonaventure is anti-Aristotelian or, at best, a synthesis of Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism, van Steenberghen held his ground:

St. Bonaventure retained a very large part of the Aristotelian heritage: the whole of his logic, his doctrine of abstraction, his essential metaphysical theses (potency and act, matter and form, substance and accidents), his views on physics and biology, and finally, many notions of moral philosophy. Thus, without the slightest doubt, we are dealing with a philosophy, all of whose bases are Aristotelian, whose technical vocabulary, principles, methods, and doctrines are largely borrowed from Aristotle.<sup>236</sup>

This passage summarizes a position very similar to what I will maintain and show throughout the course of this and the following three chapters. Why this is important to my wider topic concerning universal forms is that if we miss Bonaventure's Aristotelianism, we miss his solution to the many problems, as we have seen, which arise in developing the relationship between particulars and universal forms. It is the fact that Bonaventure to a certain extent rejects Neoplatonism with regard to his understanding of form, and instead embraces Aristotle, that he is able to provide a coherent and, indeed, satisfactory account of forms, their causal efficacy, and their relation to God.

What we want now, naturally, is some good textual research, of which unfortunately (or as Roch puts it "irritatingly") van Steenberghen provides none. In response to van Steenberghen, a few scholars actually did look up the references to Aristotle in Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Sentences*. There is, of course, the well-known study done by Bougerol,<sup>237</sup> which was more detailed and more accurate than the study of Aristotle's texts which he presented in his book, *Introduction à l'Étude de Saint Bonaventure*.<sup>238</sup> According to Bougerol's numbers, in the Quaracchi edition of the *opera omnia*, Bonaventure makes 1015 appeals to Aristotle, of which Bougerol

---

<sup>235</sup> Fernand van Steenberghen, *The Philosophical Movement in the Thirteenth Century* (Belfast: Nelson, 1955), 73.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>237</sup> J. Guy Bougerol, "Dossier pour l'étude des rapports entre Saint Bonaventure et Aristote," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 40 (1973): 135–222.

<sup>238</sup> J. Guy Bougerol, *Introduction à l'étude de S. Bonaventure* (Paris: Desclée & Cie, Éditeurs, 1961).

finds 593 actual citations of texts. Of these 593, 308 are to the *Organon*; 125 to the *Metaphysics*; 136 to the *Physics*; 152 to the *Libri naturali*; 142 to *De Anima*; 142 to the *Ethics*; and but ten to the *Rhetoric*.<sup>239</sup> Unfortunately, Bougerol does not provide us with a number of citations of Augustine to which we could compare these numbers.

However, while Bougerol seems reluctant to make the strong claim that van Steenberghen makes, he admits that his study shows that one cannot deny that Bonaventure knew Aristotle's texts at least sufficiently well and had no qualms about using Aristotle whenever and wherever he could. Yet, on Bougerol's reading, Bonaventure's use of Aristotle is just that: he is *using* Aristotle, but this does not make him an Aristotelian. What perhaps is "irritating," then, about Bougerol's study is the large number of citations of Aristotle, coupled with the claim that Aristotle does not have much of a real influence on Bonaventure's thought. All Bougerol concludes is that Bonaventure knew Aristotle "sufficiently," that Bonaventure did not have a negative attitude towards Aristotle,<sup>240</sup> and that he considered Aristotle a master (only) of logic and natural science.<sup>241</sup> Yet, one would at the very least like Bougerol to tell us the precise philosophical positions on which Aristotle and Bonaventure disagree, and that this is what drives that wedge between the two and justifies us placing them into two different, or even opposing, philosophical schools of thought.

While Bougerol fails us on this point, Léo Elders in his aptly titled "Les Citations d'Aristote dans le 'commentaire sur les sentences' de Saint Bonaventure" at least targets a point of conflict between Bonaventure and Aristotle: the ontological status of the forms.<sup>242</sup> For Bonaventure, forms possess *esse* and this is what marks his thought as Neoplatonic and plainly un-Aristotelian – Elders maintaining a reading of Aristotle which would better accord with Aquinas' philosophy. Interestingly (and conveniently), Elders' study fails to look at the places in the *Commentary* where Bonaventure explicitly develops his understanding of the forms as having *esse* and their relationship to composite substances. For if he did, he would see precisely what his article claimed to study: *citations d'Aristote*. This lacuna is precisely what we will fill in the following chapter.

Moreover, a further failing in both of the studies by Elders and Bougerol, as well as in a similar work done by Marchesi, is that all of them choose as their representative

---

<sup>239</sup> There is something misleading about Bougerol's presentation of these citations: instead of listing each work from the *Organon* with the corresponding number of citations, he lumps all the citations together which makes it look like Bonaventure is using Aristotelian *logic* most, not Aristotelian *metaphysics*.

<sup>240</sup> J. Guy Bougerol, "Dossier pour l'étude des rapports entre Saint Bonaventure et Aristote," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 40 (1973): 222. "... cette attitude n'est pas chez lui, une attitude négative et 'conservatrice'... [Bonaventure] connaît [Aristote] suffisamment pour utiliser toutes les richesses de cet observateur infatigable et réaliste des choses, pour aussi le désertier dès qu'il s'agit de rendre compte du sens religieux de ces mêmes choses."

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.* "... il considère qu'Aristote peut être le maître de logique et le naturaliste..."

<sup>242</sup> Léo Elders, "Les Citations d'Aristote dans le 'commentaire sur les sentences' de Saint Bonaventure," *Miscellanea Francescana* 75 (1975): 831–84.

examples of citations of Aristotle in Bonaventure quotes which are more or less meaningless.<sup>243</sup> For example, the *De Caelo* reference which Bougerol uses as his paradigm is: “[A] small mistake in the beginning results in a large mistake in the end” – something which could have been said by anyone in any number of contexts. While it is a good line to use in order to determine which translation Bonaventure has, to fail to note the more philosophical citations of *De Caelo* paints an inaccurate picture of Bonaventure’s use of *De Caelo*.<sup>244</sup> The triviality of the examples which Bougerol and others give makes Bonaventure’s use of Aristotle likewise appear trivial – not foundational.

To bring this section to a conclusion, we can say that after eighty years or so since this debate was sparked by van Steenberghe’s heresy, we have no accurate sense of how much Bonaventure quotes Aristotle in his philosophical texts, or what weight these quotations have in his wider philosophical project. The latter point will be addressed throughout the following chapters. Right now, however, I can address the first. I myself counted the number of Aristotle and Augustine citations to give the accurate comparison – but restricted my counting only to the second book of the *Commentary on the Sentences*, precisely because my concern here is Bonaventure’s natural philosophy, not his theology. It is probably good to remember that much of the second book deals with topics where Aristotle’s texts would seem to have little use, i.e. angels, sin, human nature before the fall, etc. If I really wanted to get at only Bonaventure’s philosophical positions, I would have eliminated these questions, but I did not – so even in my numbers the bias should be towards Augustine, not Aristotle. Again, my bias should be in favor of Augustine since I am relying on the references provided by the Quaracchi editors, who often miss or give an incorrect reference to Aristotle. I counted every type of reference to Aristotle and Augustine (i.e. every quotation, mention, and reference), which made my numbers larger than Bougerol’s but gives a more accurate picture of where Bonaventure was making use of concepts derived from either Aristotle or Augustine, not only mentioning their names for the sake of an argument from authority. I found 658 references made to Augustine in comparison to 972 to Aristotle. Among these 972 references to Aristotle, the most often cited texts are, in the following order: *Physics* (155), *De Anima* (150), *Metaphysics* (147), *Topics* (96), *De Caelo* (81).

Moreover, I found Bonaventure to use Aristotle in a manner that does not indicate a “sufficient” knowledge of Aristotle, but an extremely deep knowledge of the texts

---

<sup>243</sup> Angelo Marchesi, “L’atteggiamento di S. Bonaventura di Fronte al Pensiero di Aristotele,” in *Atti Del Congresso Internazionale per Il VII Centenario Di San Bonaventura Da Bagnoregio: San Bonaventura, Maestro Di Vita Francescana e Di Sapienza Cristiana: Roma, 19-26 Settembre 1974* (Roma: Pontificia Facoltà Teologica San Bonaventura, 1976), 843–59.

<sup>244</sup> It is interesting to mention again Bonaventure’s use of *De Caelo* in these questions concerning the ontological status of the forms, because Elders himself translated and wrote a commentary on *De Caelo*. Thus it is surprising that someone who knew the text so well would miss the references to it made by Bonaventure, especially when Bonaventure mentions the title of the text and the book number explicitly, and the full reference is given by the editors of the Quaracchi edition.

and a willingness to use them even for the discussion of theological matters. An interesting example is that Bonaventure explicitly argues against Augustine's account of evil as a pure privation in favor of the view of evil he finds in the *Metaphysics*: in Distinction 18 which deals greatly with the topic of evil, Augustine is referenced 16 times and Aristotle 41. Again, in the question of whether the seminal reason of Eve was in the rib of Adam, Bonaventure, by answering in the negative, departs from the traditional Augustinian notion of seminal reasons and instead endorses a view of seminal reasons which he claims to derive from Aristotle. Moreover, Bonaventure cites from effectively every work in the Aristotelian corpus, including spurious or obscure works – this is to say, he is not just citing from the *Topics* to form arguments, he is citing from, e.g., *De Caelo* to form foundational concepts. Indeed, he is happy to put his knowledge of Aristotle's texts to use in questions where one would not expect Aristotle to be in any way applicable. A prime example of the kind of in-depth knowledge which Bonaventure has of Aristotle's texts, and the way in which he often reaches for obscure (and arguably unnecessary) references to Aristotle: in discussing sin among angels, as we mentioned earlier, Bonaventure uses the example and analysis which Aristotle gives, almost parenthetically, of the character of Medea in the *Poetics*.<sup>245</sup> Indeed, to say that Bonaventure had a "sufficient understanding" of Aristotle, as Bougerol concluded from his counting, is a great understatement.

Naturally, however, numbers do not amount to a full understanding of the way in which Bonaventure uses Aristotle, as well as his other sources. Indeed, Bougerol's numbers could have been correct while, nevertheless, the fewer Aristotle citations could be of greater importance in Bonaventure's development of foundational metaphysical theses. Alternatively, despite my numbers, Bonaventure might very well be using Aristotle in a superficial manner. My task now is to show that the latter scenario is not the case and to show instead that Bonaventure is rather using Aristotle as the starting point for the development of his understanding of forms, and that this use of Aristotle is of key importance to Bonaventure's wider philosophical project. For this, we now need to examine the texts themselves.

## 2. THE "ANTI-ARISTOTELIANISM" OF THE *COLLATIONES*

But first, as promised, I wish to address in more detail those places in the *Collationes* where earlier scholars saw such a clear testament of Bonaventure's anti-Aristotelian sentiment. As we mentioned in the introduction, in the *Collationes*, Bonaventure accuses Aristotelianism of a "threefold blindness" – which includes maintaining the three erroneous views: (1) the eternity of the world, (2) the unity of intellect, and (3) the denial of exemplar causation or transcendent ideas (i.e. Platonic forms). Quite clearly, the unity of intellect is not a position which Aristotle himself maintains (or at least maintains explicitly), thus our focus in this section is on the first and third

<sup>245</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 6, a. 1, q. 2, p. 163b.



positions, both of which concern God's causal efficacy – i.e. that he creates at one point in time and does so via exemplars.

Turning our attention first of all to the eternity of the world, it is indeed difficult to find a commentator on Bonaventure's thought who does not consider this issue to signify a major rift between Aristotle and Bonaventure. My thesis concerning Bonaventure's arguments against the eternity of the world is that it is plainly incorrect to use this point in Bonaventure to assert an anti-Aristotelian sentiment. Why? (1) Because his arguments *against* an eternal world come from Aristotle, barring the sixth which is based on definition – in fact, Bonaventure cites *only* Aristotle in this discussion – and, (2) Bonaventure *explicitly* takes the stance that Aristotle's own position on this point is, speaking prudently, unclear.<sup>246</sup> What I mean here is that Bonaventure states that he himself is unsure whether Aristotle considered the world to be eternal in an absolute sense or in a relative sense, i.e. with regard only to natural moving causes, not with regard to a first principle outside of nature – the latter being an option which Aristotle does not consider in his arguments for an eternal cosmos. This is not an odd position to take. A similar position is maintained by a thinker who we would certainly call "Aristotelian": Albert the Great. Thus, contrary to the generally held view among scholars, Bonaventure sees Aristotle as a neutral in this debate, not an opponent, i.e. someone whose arguments may be used by either side.<sup>247</sup> This is, moreover, precisely how Bonaventure expresses his so-called critique of Aristotle in the *Collationes*, by saying that the view that the world is eternal is not necessarily one supported by Aristotle, but imposed on Aristotle by later thinkers.<sup>248</sup> Indeed, in the *Commentary*, Bonaventure asserts that within Aristotle's own system, it is not only consistent to say that the world had a beginning, but rather makes more sense than asserting the opposite.<sup>249</sup> This is to

---

<sup>246</sup> This latter point is particularly important insofar as we will see Bonaventure maintain a similar position with regard to Aristotle's view of preexisting principles. *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 3, pp. 22b-23a. "Quidem tanti moderni dicunt, Philosophum nequaquam illud sensisse nec intendisse probare, quod mundus omnino non coeperit, sed quod non coeperit naturali motu. – Quod horum magis verum sit, ego nescio; hoc unum scio, quod si possuit mundum non incepisse sencudm naturam, verum possuit, et rationes eius sumtae a motu et tempore sunt efficaces. Si autem hoc sensit, quod nullo modo coeperit; manifeste erravit, sicut pluribus rationibus ostesum est supra."

<sup>247</sup> To a certain extent, this is also similar to the approach taken by Simplicius to the problem of the eternity of the world in Aristotle – looking to resolve the apparent conflict (certainly) not between Christianity and Aristotle, but between Plato and Aristotle.

<sup>248</sup> *Hex.* VI.4. "... as Aristotle seems to say, according to all of the Greek Doctors, as Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Damascus, Basil, and all of the Arabic commentators...." "Ex quibus sequitur triplex caecitas vel caligo, scilicet de aeternitate mundi, ut videtur dicere Aristoteles secundum omnes doctores Graecos, ut Gregorium Nyssenum, Gregorium Nanzianzenum, Damascenum, Basili-um, et commentatores omnium Arabum, qui dicunt, quod Aristoteles hoc sensit, et verba sua sonare videtur. Nunquam invenies, wuod ipse dicat, quod mundus habuit principium vel initium; immo regarduit Platonem, qui solus videtur posuisse, temus incepisse. Et istud repugnat lumini veritatis."

<sup>249</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 3, p. 23a. [Quotation continued from note 246] "... Et necesse fuit, eum ad vitandam contradictionem ponere, aut mundum non esse factum, aut non esse factum ex nihilo. Ad vitandum ante antem infinitatem actualem necesse fuit ponere aut animae rationalis corruptionem,

say that while Aristotle himself might not have maintained that the world had a beginning, *Aristotelianism* supports the claim that the world began at one point in time and, as a philosophical system, Aristotelianism is helpful – if not foundational – in arguing for this claim.

Contrary to my points above, for Gilson (naturally), the fact that Bonaventure argues against the eternity of the world is only further evidence of Bonaventure's anti-Aristotelian (or generally anti-philosophical) sentiment.<sup>250</sup> Bettoni, whose approach to Bonaventure as a philosopher is more sympathetic, does not use Bonaventure's arguments against the eternity of the world to support the position that Bonaventure is anti-Aristotelian. On the other hand, he makes no mention of the fact that Bonaventure uses Aristotle throughout these arguments.<sup>251</sup> Bougerol takes a similar approach to Bettoni – neither using the arguments to deny Bonaventure's Aristotelianism, nor to affirm it, but nevertheless denies that Bonaventure was much influenced by Aristotle or knew his texts very well.<sup>252</sup> Marchesi lists this issue about the eternity of the world as a major rift between the two thinkers.<sup>253</sup> Quinn comes close to the reality of the situation in saying that Bonaventure's first two arguments are based on Aristotelian notions of infinity. However, he then asserts that at their foundation they rather depend upon an Augustinian notion of time, despite the fact that Augustine is neither explicitly nor implicitly referenced in any of the arguments – indeed, Quinn references Augustine frequently in his summaries of the arguments.<sup>254</sup> Quinn also grants the Aristotelian nature of the fifth argument, but is sure to say as the closing remark of his analysis that even though Bonaventure is aware that Aristotle's position concerning the eternity of the world is not as problematic as the Arabic thinkers, this “does not imply that Bonaventure is an Aristotelian.”<sup>255</sup> In fact, only a few scholars stand out who paint an accurate picture of Bonaventure's use of Aristotle in these arguments: indeed Boehner alone is consistent in giving the references to Aristotle in listing these arguments.<sup>256</sup> How-

---

aut unitatem, aut circulationem; et ita auferre beatitudinem. Unde isse error et malum habet initium et pessimum habet finem.”

<sup>250</sup> It is interesting that Gilson thinks this, because he is actually one of the few scholars who notes that these arguments are based in Aristotle.

<sup>251</sup> Efreem Bettoni, *San Bonaventura da Bagnoregio: gli aspetti filosofici del suo pensiero* (Milano: Ediz. Biblioteca Franciscana, 1973), 123-125.

<sup>252</sup> Jacques-Guy Bougerol, “Dossier Pour l'étude Des Rapports Entre Saint Bonaventure et Aristote,” *Archives d'histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire Du Moyen Age* 40 (1973): 222.

<sup>253</sup> Angelo Marchesi, “L'atteggiamento di S. Bonaventura di fronte al pensiero di Aristotele,” in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale per il VII centenario di San Bonaventura da Bagnoregio*, I, a cura di Alfonso Pompei, (Napoli: Tip. Laurentiana, 1976), 843-859.

<sup>254</sup> John F. Quinn, “St. Bonaventure and the Arabian Interpretations of Two Aristotelian Problems,” *Franciscan Studies* 37 (1977): 219-228.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.* 228.

<sup>256</sup> Philotheus Boehner, *The History of the Franciscan School: Saint Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1945; re-mimeographed at Duns Scotus College, Detroit, 1947), 52-56. Dales also discusses Bonaventure's use of Aristotle in these arguments. *Medieval Discussions of the Eternity of the World* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 86-97. Dales does not explicitly provide the references from

ever, he does so in a book which, despite Boehner's death over eighty years ago, has yet to be published in any form other than a mimeograph copy.<sup>257</sup>

In the course of the six arguments which Bonaventure presents, Aristotle is mentioned by name once, directly quoted in two, and referenced in all but the final. After presenting the arguments, we see Bonaventure state explicitly almost the same position which he will maintain with regard to Aristotle's notion of the world and preexisting principles: that Aristotle's wider metaphysical system is not in conflict with a temporal creation *ex nihilo*, even though he does not explicitly take such a position. The fact that this addendum to the six arguments is rarely mentioned in scholarship indeed contributes greatly to the perception that Bonaventure is arguing against Aristotle, when, in fact, he considers it most likely that Aristotle is on his side in this debate. His opponents are rather the Arabic thinkers, whose arguments he notes are, like his own, based in Aristotle's texts, but supplemented, i.e. that these arguments are "added onto Aristotle's reasons by commentators and contemporaries [i.e. of Bonaventure]."<sup>258</sup>

I am going very quickly to summarize the arguments, since they are fairly standard and easy to understand<sup>259</sup> – and I leave the task of assessing their validity to

---

Aristotle in connection with Bonaventure's arguments, but he is right to compare Bonaventure's use of Aristotle to both Albert the Great and John Philoponus – although the latter is not interested in having Aristotle on his side in this debate, as we will see, Bonaventure indeed is (which would rather make his approach closer to that of Simplicius than Philoponus). Cullen also discusses the influence of Aristotle on Bonaventure's arguments in *Bonaventure* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), 43–44.

<sup>257</sup> See also: Francis Kovach, "The Question of the Eternal World in St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas – A Critical Analysis," *The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 5, no. 2 (1974): 141–172. Kovach calls Bonaventure's reasoning "Aristotelian" in his fifth argument (only) but does not mention Aristotle with reference to the other arguments – even at a point when Kovach quotes Bonaventure directly quoting Aristotle – and simply attributes this to Bonaventure. He does however provide the Aristotle references for Aquinas' arguments. Again, Bonansea considers Bonaventure to be arguing against Aristotle and that Bonaventure thinks Plato maintains the position similar to the Christian position (i.e. in the *Timaeus*) – no reference to Bonaventure's texts is provided in support of this. In reality, Bonaventure does not mention Plato or the Platonists in the entirety of the question on the eternity of the world. He references Plato only in his discussion of whether the world was made from preexisting principles, where he asserts that for Plato there are two eternal principles, form and matter – a reading of Plato which implies that Bonaventure considers that Plato thinks the world is eternal, or at least its principles are, and thereby the account of "creation" provided by Plato and the Platonists *reprobata est*. Bonansea interestingly provides the citations of Aristotle, but then continually places the words into Bonaventure's mouth: "if the world were eternal, as Aristotle says." Bernardino Bonansea, "The question of an eternal world in the teaching of St. Bonaventure," *Franciscan Studies* 34 (1974): 7–33.

<sup>258</sup> "Hae sunt rationes, quas commentatores et moderniores superaddunt rationibus Aristotelis, sive ad has possunt reduci." *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2, p. 20b. Quinn notes this as well: John F. Quinn, "St. Bonaventure and the Arabian Interpretations of Two Aristotelian Problems," *Franciscan Studies* 37 (1977): 219–228.

<sup>259</sup> It is important to note a point which I think is often glossed over in secondary scholarship on these arguments: these arguments are mainly targeting an eternity *in the past*, not in the future. It would be exceedingly more difficult to assert that Aristotle thinks the world will come to an end – and, indeed, this is not the position which Bonaventure is attributing to Aristotle (or to Aristotelianism), but only that it began in the past.

others.<sup>260</sup> (1) If the world were eternal, an infinite number of days would have passed, and each day which occurs adds another day. But it is impossible to add to the infinite. Therefore, the world is not eternal. (2) It is impossible to order the infinite. Thus, if the world were infinite, there would be no order, e.g., to the movement of celestial bodies. (3) It is impossible to traverse that which is infinite; therefore we never could reach the present. (4) If the world were eternal, it would be infinite. Yet our minds are finite, and the finite cannot comprehend the infinite – i.e. we would not have a concept of the world as a whole. (5) If the world were eternal, then there would exist an infinity of rational souls – since, for Bonaventure, there is no transmigration of the soul – but this is impossible. (6) The word “creation” means making something exist *after* it did not, and this implies a temporality to the act.

The first argument – i.e. it is impossible to add to the infinite – contains a quote from *De Caelo*, which is the premise for the argument, “it is impossible that infinity be increased.”<sup>261</sup> The second argument, that it is impossible to order the infinite, names Aristotle as an authority but does not provide a reference to a text or a quote. The Quaracchi edition adds references to *Physics* VIII.5 and *Metaphysics* II.2, i.e. the argument for a first mover and an argument against an infinite downward motion, respectively.

The third argument begins with a quotation from the *Posterior Analytics*: “It is impossible to traverse the numerically infinite.”<sup>262</sup> This seems also to be referencing an argument from *De Caelo*, where Aristotle writes: “It is impossible for the infinite line to move at all, for if it moves even the slightest bit, it must take an infinite time.”<sup>263</sup> This argument indeed closely resembles Bonaventure’s claim that movement across infinite time, since time is the measurement of motion, would take an infinite amount of time, and we would therefore never reach the present. Aristotle also likewise asserts in the *Physics*: “It is impossible therefore, that there should be

---

<sup>260</sup> For an interesting comparison between Bonaventure and Aquinas, a summary of arguments for the eternity of the world provided by Albert the Great in his commentary on the *Physics*, as well as Kant, see: Fernand van Steenberghen, “Le Mythe D’un Monde Éternel: Note Complémentaire,” *Revue Philosophique De Louvain* 80, no. 47 (1982): 486–499. Van Steenberghen defends Bonaventure’s arguments against Aquinas, Albert, and Kant. Interestingly, Albert the Great, according to a study completed by A. Zimmerman, defends the eternity of the world and his arguments would undo Bonaventure’s: A. Zimmerman, “Alberts Kritik an einem Argument für den Anfang der Welt,” in *Albert der Grosse. Seine Zeit, sein Werk, seine Wirkung* (Berlin: De Gruyter, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 14, 1981), 77–78. For other studies and assessments of Bonaventure’s arguments see: Bernardino Bonansea, “The Question of an Eternal World in the Teaching of St. Bonaventure,” *Franciscan Studies* 34 (1974): 7–33; Francis Kovach, “The Question of the Eternal World in St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas – A Critical Analysis,” *The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 5, no. 2 (1974): 141–172; John F. Quinn, “St. Bonaventure and the Arabian Interpretations of Two Aristotelian Problems,” *Franciscan Studies* 37 (1977): 219–228.

<sup>261</sup> This is not perhaps a direct quote, but refers to the argument in *De Cael.* I.7 that an infinite body cannot be increased.

<sup>262</sup> “Therefore, since it is impossible to traverse the numerically infinite, we shall not know by means of demonstration those predicates which are demonstrable.” *Post. An.* I.22 34a1–5, cf. *Meta.* X.10.

<sup>263</sup> *De Cael.* I.5 272b12–13.

in a straight line, continuous movement which is everlasting.”<sup>264</sup> Bonaventure may also be referencing the discussion of infinite motion in *Metaphysics* III.3, where a similar argument is spelled out.

The fourth argument, that a finite mind cannot comprehend the infinite, seems to be a reference to the *Metaphysics*, where Aristotle asks: “[H]ow is it possible to obtain knowledge of the numerically infinite?”<sup>265</sup> Codices P and Q also have written in the margin a reference to the end of *Physics* VII, which seems less similar but still somewhat applicable, where Aristotle asserts that something which is finite cannot have infinite power – i.e. knowing the infinite would imply infinite power on the part of the knower.

The fifth argument contains a direct quote from Aristotle, and a paraphrase of Aristotle’s position that no natural thing can contain an infinity.<sup>266</sup> Bonaventure then asserts that if the world were eternal, there would be an infinite number of souls, since souls only endure for a small amount of time. For Bonaventure, this is an unavoidable conclusion insofar as he himself considers the transmigration of the soul to be impossible. The basis for the position that there is no transmigration of the soul, he takes from Aristotle, whom he quotes, “the proper act is in the proper matter.”<sup>267</sup> Therefore, the soul, while it may be all things potentially, is only the proper act of this particular man – it cannot be in many men. The last argument is the only one which does not depend on Aristotle and instead is merely based on the definition of creation.

Having given his arguments against an eternal world, Bonaventure then addresses the question of where Aristotle – whom he here calls the “most excellent of philosophers” – stood in this debate.<sup>268</sup> He first of all makes clear that the arguments of his opponents, like his own, are not entirely representative of Aristotle’s position – both sides of the debate are indeed adding on to Aristotle. Here, Bonaventure could have very well maintained that Aristotelian principles and concepts are helpful in forming an argument for a temporal beginning to the world, but nevertheless Aristotle, or Aristotelianism as a whole, would contradict this claim. However, we see Bonaventure rather take somewhat the position of an agnostic on this point. Indeed, quite to the opposite of what is the common picture painted in contemporary scholarship (based only on the *Collationes*), in the *Commentary* Bonaventure thinks if not Aristotle himself, at least *Aristotelianism* may very well be on his side in this debate. He writes: “[S]ome contemporaries say that the Philosopher did by no means

<sup>264</sup> *Phys.* VIII.8 263a2-4.

<sup>265</sup> *Meta.* III.3 999a27-28.

<sup>266</sup> *Meta.* XI.9 1066b21-35, *Phys.* III.5 204a8-10.

<sup>267</sup> *De An.* II.2 414a26-27. The precise line runs as follows: “For the actuality of each thing is naturally inherent in its potentiality, that is in its own proper matter.”

<sup>268</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2, p. 22b. “... et adeo rationabilis, ut etiam ille excellentior inter philosophos, Aristoteles, secundum quod Sancti imponunt, et commentatores exponunt, et verba eius praetendunt in hunc errorem dilapsus fuerit.”

feel nor intend to demonstrate that the world did not begin at all, but only that it did not begin by a natural motion. – Which of these is true, *I don't know...*<sup>269</sup> Here, he is indicating that a position similar to Albert's is fully possible, but is not himself committing to it. Indeed, and particularly from a modern viewpoint, we would say that Bonaventure should know that Aristotle affirms that the world is eternal. Yet, he is reluctant to commit to this position either. He continues: “But I know that if he posited the world did not begin *according to nature*, then he reasoned *correctly*, and his reasons summarized from motion and time are efficacious. But, if he felt that the world did not begin *at all*; then plainly he was wrong, according to the many reasons put forth above”<sup>270</sup> – reasons which were all based on foundational positions in Aristotle's metaphysics.

This is somewhat of an odd position: if Aristotle said that the world did not begin, with the caveat that he is making this claim only in a discussion of physical causes, then Aristotle is right. But, of course, if Aristotle did think that there was absolutely no beginning to the world, then, according to Bonaventure, he is wrong.<sup>271</sup> Yet, Bonaventure does not take this as a given; rather, the position that Aristotle only maintained an eternal world from the perspective of physical causes is just as probable as the position that he maintained the world was eternal in an absolute sense – this constituting Bonaventure's agnosticism.<sup>272</sup> However, the strong point which Bonaventure is making is that if Aristotle thought the latter, then he is in contradiction with his own more foundational positions – and accordingly, even if not Aristotle himself, at least Aristotelianism supports the claim that the world began at one point in time.

The takeaway from Bonaventure's agnosticism here is that he does not seem to want to admit that Aristotle is in contradiction with his own position – i.e. Aristotle is not Bonaventure's opponent here (nor is he in the *Collationes*). And Bonaventure appears to take this approach for two reasons: (1) because he wishes to use Aristotle in forming his own arguments against the eternity of the world and, perhaps more importantly, (2) he quite clearly considers Aristotle as an authority and thereby wants to eliminate the possibility of the Arabic philosophers claiming him as an authority on their side of the debate,<sup>273</sup> i.e. to say to his Arabic counterparts that they cannot claim Aristotle because Aristotle is unclear on this point.

<sup>269</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2, pp. 22b-23a. “Quidam tamen moderni dicunt, Philosophum nequaquam illud sensisse nec intendisse probare quod mundus omnino non coeperit, sed quod non coeperit naturali motu. – Quod horum magis verum sit, ego nescio...”

<sup>270</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2, p. 23a. “... hoc unum scio, quod si posuit, mundus non incepisse secundum naturam, verum posuit, et rationes eius sumtae a motu et tempore sunt efficaces. Si autem hoc sensit, quod nullo modo coeperit; manifeste erravit, sicut pluribus rationibus ostensum est supra.”

<sup>271</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 3, p. 23a. “Si autem hoc sensit, quod nullo modo coeperit; manifeste erravit, sicut pluribus rationibus ostensum est supra.”

<sup>272</sup> In contrast to Albert who would say the former is correct.

<sup>273</sup> Van Steenberghe takes a similar position here regarding how Bonaventure viewed Aristotle: that Aristotle only thinks the world is eternal because it wouldn't have occurred to him not to think so.

Here, we can also compare Bonaventure's approach to Aristotle regarding the eternity of the world to Aquinas' approach. On the one hand, Aquinas asserts that Aristotle made all of the right moves insofar as Aristotle had only access to human reason, which, for Aquinas, even taking into consideration a transcendent cause, would lead one to say that the world is eternal – Aristotle was missing only a copy of the Bible. On the other hand, Bonaventure says that Aristotle made all the right moves working within a purely physical cosmos – he is missing precisely the consideration of a transcendent God. This is to say that if someone asked Aristotle, while he was writing the *Physics* or *De Caelo*: “What about the God of *Metaphysics* XII?” or, “What about another kind of transcendent principle?” Aristotle could very likely have expressed the same position as Bonaventure. Thus, for Bonaventure, the limit on Aristotle was not placed by the insufficiency of human reason, but only the context in which Aristotle was forming these arguments.

An important connected issue here is the question of not only creation at one point in time but also creation *ex nihilo*, i.e. “God produced all things immediately.”<sup>274</sup> Bonaventure's main opponents in this discussion are indeed again not Aristotle, but Plato and the Neoplatonists. Bonaventure summarizes the Neoplatonic position, (interestingly) referencing the *Liber de Causis*, “which posits an ordered ranking in producing, descending in the following manner: God, while he is utterly simple, whose act is intellection, does not produce anything but the one and the first intelligence.”<sup>275</sup> According to the Neoplatonic position, there is a distinction between a God, who is utterly simple insofar as he knows only himself, and the intelligence, which lacks simplicity insofar as it knows itself and God, the principle above it. Thus, the intelligence “produced its orb and the intelligence of the second orb; and so following this all the way down to the orbs of the moon and the tenth intelligence, which irradiates upon rational animals, and just as there is order in producing, so there is in irradiating.”<sup>276</sup>

The first issue Bonaventure has with this position is that it posits (or implies) a preexisting principle of matter, or potentiality (*potentia sive materiali principio*),

---

In this sense, Aristotle was simply “*acculé à considérer l'univers comme éternel dans le passé*” – i.e. the eternity of the world is not a position which Aristotle actively defends, just one to which he also does not actively object. Fernand van Steenberghe, “Le Mythe d'un Monde Éternel: Note Complémentaire,” *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 80, no. 47 (1982): 497.

<sup>274</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1. p. 1. a. 2, q. 2, p. 29a. “Deus omnia immediate produxerit.”

<sup>275</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1. p. 1. a. 2, q. 2, p. 29a. “... qui posuerunt ordinem in producendo gradatim descendendo hoc modo: Deus, cum sit omnino simplex, cuius actus est intelligere, non produxit nisi intelligentiam primam et unicam.” He seems to be referring generally to the *Liber de Causis*. We find this position in Proclus in *El.* §§ 3, 9, 16.

<sup>276</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1. p. 1. a. 2, q. 2, p. 29a. “... ita produxit orbem suum et intelligentiam secundi orbis; et sic deinceps usque ad orbem lunae et intelligentiam decimam, quae irradiat super animas racionales; et sicut ordo est in producendo, ita in irradiando.”

which is not properly caused by (any of) the first principle(s).<sup>277</sup> This indeed concerns the issue of the existence of non-being (or evil). Bonaventure's solution, along the lines of what we saw (albeit briefly) in Dionysius, will be discussed in the final chapter, but we can nevertheless grant this as a fair objection to the Neoplatonic system of emanation. If everything in the natural world is caused by the intelligences, or the forms, where does matter/non-being or potentiality come from?

Bonaventure's second objection is somewhat more obvious, given that we are dealing with a Christian thinker: the fact that the Neoplatonic emanation posits quasi-deities which stand between God and the physical cosmos. Bonaventure makes this objection, however, not by appealing to Christian doctrine, but by asserting that it is absurd to posit a first principle – if it is most simple and most powerful – that can only produce one thing. To put this another way, why does the first principle, if it is really first, need the help of the intellect to communicate itself causally? Bonaventure writes:

For [this position of the Neoplatonists] says that God, since he is most simple, produces only one thing; but all the more is the opposite the case, since the degree to which something is simple is the degree to which it is powerful (*potentius*), and the degree to which something is powerful is the degree to which it can be in many things (*in plures potest*): therefore, if God is most simple, he can be in all things without mediation.<sup>278</sup>

From this, we see that Bonaventure is very much committed to avoiding such an emanation: he rather considers the world to be caused by God immediately.

Well aware, then, of this worry about mediation, he also knows that he cannot posit forms separate from material things – and, accordingly, he argues against the separate forms of Plato. Naturally, he takes the position: “The world was produced from nothing both according to the whole and according to its intrinsic principles.”<sup>279</sup> He understands the Platonists to posit preexisting principles, matter and forms, with the forms being separate from their sensible and temporal participants. Bonaventure targets, in a preliminary way, two points in this position to critique. Of course, the most obvious is the third man which Bonaventure references, albeit without spelling it out: “[A]nd it seems absurd to posit a third man....”<sup>280</sup> The

<sup>277</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1. p. 1. a. 2, q. 2, p. 29a. “Sed supposito potenciali sive materiali principio plures fuerunt philosophi....”

<sup>278</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1. p. 1. a. 2, q. 2, p. 29. “Dicit enim, quod quia simplicissimus est Deus, non producit nisi unum; sed hoc magis est ad oppositum, quia quanto aliquid simplicius, tanto potentius, et quanto potentius, tanto in plura potest: ergo si Deus simplicissimus, hoc ispo potest in omnia sine media.”

<sup>279</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1. p. 1. a. 1, q. 1, p. 16a. “Mundus de nihilo est productus et secundum se totum et secundum sua principia intrinseca.”

<sup>280</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1. p. 1. a. 1, q. 1, p. 16b. “Fuerunt et tertii, qui mundum ex principiis praeexistentibus factum posuerunt, scilicet materia et forma; se materia per se posuerunt, formas seperatas et postmodum ex tempore ob opifice summo esse coniunctas. Et hi fuerunt Platonicus. – Sed quia illud irrationabile videtur, quod materia ab aeterno fuerit imperfecta, et quod eadem forma sit seperata parit-



second issue which Bonaventure raises goes in a slightly different direction and simply attacks the possibility of positing forms in any way separate from matter, insofar as matter is pure potentiality – for “matter, which is in itself imperfect, is not perfected except through the form,”<sup>281</sup> i.e. matter never exists unless it receives (or is composed with) some principle of being, namely, a form.<sup>282</sup> If, then, the forms are always separate from matter, matter never attains any level of perfection, i.e. it never exists in any way. Were matter never to have form, it would never attain any kind of existence, and no material thing would ever exist. But material things do exist. Hence, it is absurd to say that forms could ever be separate from matter.

Before we find Bonaventure’s next set of criticisms of the Platonists, he entertains the position of the Peripatetics, whose *princeps et dux* was Aristotle.<sup>283</sup> Approaching this text from the standard view of the relationship between Aristotle and Bonaventure, one would expect Bonaventure to find Aristotle’s understanding of whether the world came to be from preexisting principles also to be problematic. Yet, just as we saw in the previous question concerning the eternity of the world, here again Bonaventure gives Aristotle the benefit of the doubt. He quotes, in support of the claim that Aristotle might very well have maintained a creation *ex nihilo*, the *Meteorology*: “I say therefore that the sea was made,”<sup>284</sup> and then references the beginning of *De Caelo*.<sup>285</sup> Moreover, Bonaventure adds that he also thinks there are “so many other places (*pluribus aliis locis*)” where Aristotle says this that he does not even have to provide the citations himself.<sup>286</sup>

This is indeed an interesting position for Bonaventure to take here; again, he does not seem to think Aristotle’s philosophy is in conflict with a Christian temporal

---

er et coniuncta; et absurdum videtur triplicem hominem ponere, scilicet naturalem, mathematicum, et divinum: ideo etiam per sequentes philosophos haec positio reprobata est.”

<sup>281</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 16b. “... materia, quae de se est imperfecta, nisi perficiatur per formam.”

<sup>282</sup> This is similar to Aristotle’s criticism: “How can the Ideas, if they are the substances of things, exist in separation from them?” *Meta.* III.4 991b3-5.

<sup>283</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 17a. “Fuerunt etiam quarti, scilicet Peripatetici, quorum princeps et dux fuit Aristoteles...”

<sup>284</sup> It is unclear how this helps insofar as the sea could have been made from something else. *Meteor.* II.3. Amusingly, Cicero says precisely the opposite about Aristotle and Plato as Bonaventure does. Cicero says that Plato thinks the seas were made but Aristotle does not. *Disputationes Tusculanae* I.xxviii.70.

<sup>285</sup> Note here that the editors of the Quaracchi edition have added a reference to Aristotle’s defense of the eternity of the world in *De Cael.* I.10, but this is obviously not what Bonaventure himself is referencing since (1) Bonaventure says, “at the beginning of *De Caelo*” and (2) *De Cael.* I.10 indeed provides quite the opposite position, i.e. that Aristotle thinks there is no beginning to the world at all, let alone a beginning *ex nihilo*. Here, although it is not entirely clear, I would think that Bonaventure is referencing the discussion in *De Cael.* I.4-5, where Aristotle argues that circular motion cannot be infinite – again, Bonaventure takes the prohibition on infinite motion to indicate precisely a temporal and *ex nihilo* beginning of motion.

<sup>286</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 17a. “... Aristoteles, qui veritati magis appropinquantes dixerunt mundum factum, sicut legitur in secundo Meteororum: ‘Dico igitur, quod mare factum est,’ et in principio De Caelo et mundo et de pluribus aliis locis potest elici.”

*creatio ex nihilo*. The main evidence which Bonaventure seems to be hinting at, in asserting that Aristotle does not really seem to deny a temporal creation *ex nihilo* (since he does not provide references), is Aristotle's refutation of Platonic preexisting principles (i.e. the forms), coupled with Aristotle's assertion that forms are not separate from matter – from which Bonaventure has the sense on the whole that the Peripatetics “say that the world was not made from preexisting principles.”<sup>287</sup> Bonaventure considers that if Aristotle refutes Plato's preexisting principles, the logical conclusion is that there were no preexisting (or mediating) principles at all, and that the world came to be from nothing. Yet, Bonaventure, being transparent on this point,<sup>288</sup> admits that this creation from nothing is not explicit in Aristotle, and as to whether Aristotle would really have maintained that “matter and form were made from nothing, I don't know.”<sup>289</sup> Bonaventure makes the further concession regarding this precise creation *ex nihilo* that he “[believes] nevertheless that [the Peripatetics] did *not* come to this conclusion....”<sup>290</sup> This is to say, for Aristotle, a creation from nothing is at best implied by his refutation of Platonism, and so “[the position of the Peripatetics] is lacking, but less so than the others [i.e. the Platonists and Neoplatonists].”<sup>291</sup>

Bonaventure then returns to his assessment of Plato, and this line of critique comes directly from Aristotle, whom he cites explicitly – and this time there is good textual basis: the *Metaphysics*. Here, Bonaventure writes: “For just as the Philosopher objects [to Plato], the forms of things outside of God, and separate from singulars, may cause absolutely nothing, neither with regard to operation nor with regard to cognition.”<sup>292</sup> This is, as we will see in the following chapter, a nice microcosm of Bonaventure's placement of forms in his wider ontology: the forms can neither be separate from God nor separate from nature – on both fronts, explicitly against a Neoplatonic emanation.

There are a number of points I would like to make here about Bonaventure's use of Aristotle in the text cited above, beyond the obvious that he seems much more sympathetic to Aristotle's position than the Platonic or Neoplatonic position. First

<sup>287</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 17a. “Sed dixerunt, non esse factum ex principiis praeexistentibus.”

<sup>288</sup> Bonaventure seems to think that there is more evidence that Aristotle thought the world was not eternal (in an absolute sense), than that Aristotle thought the world was made *ex nihilo*. Nevertheless, Bonaventure does not consider the creation from nothing to be in conflict with Aristotle, and, in fact, he indicates that this Christian doctrine makes good sense within Aristotle's wider metaphysics – i.e. Aristotle could have said it without contradicting himself or adding much to his own philosophy.

<sup>289</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 17a. “Utrum autem posuerit materiam et formam factum de nihilo, hoc nescio; credo tamen, quod non pervenit ad hoc, sicut melius videbitur in problemate secundo: ideo et ipse etiam defecit, licet minus quam alii.”

<sup>290</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 17a. “...credo tamen, quod non pervenit ad hoc, sicut melius videbitur in problemate secundo: ideo et ipse etiam defecit, licet minus quam alii.”

<sup>291</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 17a. “Ideo et ipse etiam defecit, licet minus quam alii.”

<sup>292</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 17b. “Nam sicut ostendit Philosophus, formae rerum extra Deum a singularibus separatae nihil omnino faciunt, nec ad operationem, nec ad cognitionem.”

of all, Bonaventure's sympathetic attitude towards Aristotle indicates that Bonaventure thinks there is no emanation in Aristotle – but he should, if he is thinking that the *Liber de Causis* is by Aristotle. Yet, he cites the *Liber de Causis* as a text which supports mediating intelligences. This indicates strongly that at least at the point of writing this question, Bonaventure did not think that the position found in the *Liber de Causis* was Aristotle's position. Alternatively, in other questions, he cites Aristotle as the author of the *Liber de Causis*. This makes one think that this particular question was written later than the questions in which Aristotle is named as the author of the *Liber de Causis*, and that perhaps in the interim Bonaventure became aware, or at least suspicious, of the fact that this was not a true work of Aristotle.<sup>293</sup> It is interesting also that other than these two citations, the references to the *Liber de Causis* are fairly sparse, and they are often cited as an opposing position. Why does this matter? I am making this point in order to address a reader who may think that Bonaventure's "Neoplatonic" reading of Aristotle is due to the fact that he thinks Aristotle wrote the *Liber de Causis* – it seems, rather to the contrary, that Bonaventure throughout the *Commentary on the Sentences* is reluctant to use the *Liber de Causis*, and almost always when he does cite it, it is cited as a negative position.

Secondly, with regard to scholarship on the relationship between Bonaventure's understanding of God (particularly exemplar causation) and his use of Aristotle: generally, Bonaventure's doctrine of exemplars is considered to be a wholly un-Aristotelian aspect of his thought – in the sense that there is nothing in Aristotle which Bonaventure finds as a correlate to his own doctrine. However, the above passage indicates that Bonaventure sees Aristotle's natural philosophy to be at the very least not in conflict with, and in fact often in support of, those places in which Bonaventure does part ways with Aristotle, i.e. on the notion of exemplarism, the question of the eternity of the world, etc.

Indeed, the above passage, which is sympathetic towards Aristotle's understanding of how the world came to be and where the forms should be placed in the ontological hierarchy, is ignored in scholarship; in its place *only* a statement which Bonaventure makes in the *Collationes* is referenced, which appears to admonish Aristotle for denying Platonic forms. As we have mentioned earlier, the supposed critique of Aristotle's rejection of Platonic forms is not really targeting the fact that Aristotle rejects Platonic forms generally, but that he rejects the transcendent forms of virtues, which Bonaventure considers need to exist in God himself.<sup>294</sup> Plato perhaps comes closer because although he does not posit the forms in God, at least they are "transcendent." However, above in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Bonaventure rather explicitly rejects Platonic forms as being in any way like

---

<sup>293</sup> Another, and indeed not improbable, option is that he cites it as being written by Aristotle only when it is helpful or convenient to himself to do so.

<sup>294</sup> *Hex.* VI.2-7.

divine exemplars, precisely because, although they are transcendent, they are not in God – and instead speaks positively only of Aristotle, praising him precisely for rejecting the forms of Plato. The only positive mention of Plato in this passage from the *Commentary* is to note that Augustine says Plato posited the forms in the mind of God.<sup>295</sup> In fact, Bonaventure does not seem to be convinced that Augustine is right on this point. If Augustine is right, then Plato is to be commended; but if Augustine is wrong, then Plato's position is wrong – as we saw above in all of the arguments that can be raised against Platonic forms which stand between a first principle and sensible things, separate from both. However, in the *Commentary*, when Bonaventure assesses Plato, he assesses him as if Augustine's evaluation is incorrect and instead cites Platonic forms as the opposing position.

The fact, however, that the above *Commentary* citation is replaced with the comment from the *Collationes* also highlights a worrying aspect of scholarship on Bonaventure. Indeed, what is often seen in Gilson and others<sup>296</sup> in a discussion of Bonaventure's critique of emanation is a list of citations from the very discussion I am citing, the omission of the comment about Aristotle, and then the insertion of the *Collationes* citation as if this were all coming from the same text and the same context. This reveals a deeper problem than wrongly portraying Bonaventure's feelings towards Aristotle insofar as it incorrectly presents Bonaventure's forms, and/or his divine exemplars, as if they are similar to Plato's forms – while neither Bonaventure's notion of forms nor his notion of divine exemplars, as we will see respectively in chapters 4 and 5, are at all like Plato's forms. Indeed, portraying Bonaventure's forms as Platonic creates a common confusion about where Bonaventure's forms are to be placed in an ontological structure – are these forms which have *esse* divine exemplars? Or are they transcendent like Plato's forms? If the exemplars are equated with Platonic forms (or even Bonaventure's notion of forms), we have a kind of ontologism where knowing the forms would mean seeing into God's mind – which also would imply a plurality in God, also absurd. Quite to the contrary, Bonaventure makes clear that the relation of the forms to God is that of creature to creator: “[S]ince these eternal ideas are not distinct from the

---

<sup>295</sup> Of course, Augustine, too, must be saying this in a general way. *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 17b. “Quod obicitur, quod omne quod producitur, producitur per simile in forma, et cognoscitur similiter; dicendum, quod est agens secundum naturam, et secundum intellectum. Agens secundum naturam producit per formas, quae sunt vere naturae, sicut homo hominem, et asinum asinum; agens per intellectum producit per formas quae non sunt aliquid rei, sed ideae in mente, sicut artifex product arcam; et sic productae sunt res, et hoc modo sunt formae rerum aeternae, quia sunt Deus. Et si sic posuit Plato, commendandus est, et sic imponit ei Augustinus. Si autem ultra processit, ut imponit ei Aristoteles, absque dubio erravit et ratio sua, quae praedicta est, omnino nihil cogit. Nam sicut ostendit Philosophus, formae rerum extra Deum a singularibus separatae nihil omnino faciunt, nec ad operationem, nec ad cognitionem.”

<sup>296</sup> See also: Angelo Marchesi, “L’atteggiamento di S. Bonaventura di fronte al pensiero di Aristotele” in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale per il VII centenario di San Bonaventura da Bagnoregio* I, a cura di Alfonso Pompei (Napoli: Tip. Laurentiana, 1976), 843–859.

Creator, they are not the true essences or quiddities of things. But the creature and the Creator differ necessarily in essence.”<sup>297</sup> On the other hand, if we try to say that Bonaventure’s notion of forms are separate and transcendent like Plato’s, then we are back to the problem of emanation – which we saw was so difficult to avoid in the earlier Christian Neoplatonists who did not have Aristotle. We can see then so clearly that it would be absurd for Bonaventure, well aware of the issues with Plato and Neoplatonism, to take Plato as his point of departure – the quasi-affirmation of Platonic forms in the *Collationes* must be said, as van Steenberghen asserts, only to placate his audience.<sup>298</sup> Moreover, so must be the affirmation of Plotinus,<sup>299</sup> whose positions regarding emanation we just saw Bonaventure quite explicitly reject. Thus, if we have two contradictory positions in two different writings, and one is made free of political/social pressure, this is the one which we have better reason to believe to be the position Bonaventure actually held: that Aristotle’s thought is more compatible with the system Bonaventure is developing.

---

<sup>297</sup> *Sc. Chr.*, II concl. (p. 89). He makes a similar point in stressing that God creates the essences of things in *Hex.* II.22.

<sup>298</sup> Fernand van Steenberghen, *The Philosophical Movement in the Thirteenth Century* (Belfast: Nelson, 1955), 59.

<sup>299</sup> *Hex.* III.27.

## CHAPTER 4

# AN ARISTOTELIAN ACCOUNT OF UNIVERSALS

*Nam sicut ostendit Philosophus, formae rerum extra Deum a singularibus  
seperatae nihil omnino faciunt, nec ad operationem, nec ad cognitionem.*

Bonaventure, *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1.

Bonaventure writes in the first question of Book II of his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, “For just as the Philosopher objects [to Plato], the forms of things outside of God, and separate from singulars, may cause absolutely nothing, neither with regard to operation nor with regard to cognition.”<sup>300</sup> This is to say that if one wishes to provide a satisfactory account of the forms and their causal efficacy, one should develop an understanding of the forms as being separate neither from sensible things nor from God. We then have two main topics for discussion: the relationship of forms to sensible things and the relationship of forms to God.

In this chapter, I will examine Bonaventure’s understanding of the ontological status of the forms per se and their relationship to sensible particulars – without, however, going into issues such as plurality of substantial forms, how forms are ordered within a composite, individuation, secondary causation, etc. These topics, which concern the details of Bonaventure’s physics, I will save for the final and seventh chapter. In chapter 5, we will discuss how Bonaventure approaches the question of how one should conceive of the forms as having their existence in God, i.e. as they are pre-contained in their cause.

Turning to my goals for this chapter, I will first of all show that Bonaventure asserts that it is the universal forms which possess primary being, i.e. that they not only give *esse*, actuality, intelligibility, and goodness to composite things, but that they themselves are *esse*, actuality, intelligibility, and goodness – a position which he finds foundation for primarily in the thought of Aristotle.

If, however, the forms are *esse*, actuality, intelligibility, and goodness, the question then arises: How does their status as such not hypostasize the forms? This question can be answered from two points of view: from the point of view of the relationship between the forms and sensible things, and from the point of view of the relationship between the forms and God. Again, saving the question of their relationship to God for the following chapter, in this chapter we will show how Bonaventure understands the forms to be entirely immanent in the natural order and thereby neither transcendent nor hypostasized, as were the forms, for example, of Plato and Proclus. It is important to stress, even in a preliminary way, that Bonaventure means something very different from Plato or the earlier Neoplatonists, pagan and

---

<sup>300</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1. p. 17b.

Christian alike, with his claim that the forms have *esse*. This point has been indeed overlooked in contemporary scholarship on Bonaventure, which rather portrays Bonaventure's claim that forms have *esse* as simply a restatement of the Neoplatonic position – and, as such, his notion of forms would not be very interesting. To the contrary, while the Platonic/Neoplatonic forms have a transcendent being which exists separately from the sensible world of becoming, for Bonaventure, the forms are in no way separate. Rather, they are the *only* things which exist – they are the natural order. There is not one world of sensible things and one world of forms – there is only one world: the forms. Thus, while, like the Neoplatonists, Bonaventure maintains that forms have being in themselves, he denies that their being is in any sense separate from sensible composites.

In chapter 1, we saw Dionysius, as well as to a great extent Augustine, trying to eliminate the Neoplatonic hypostasis of the Intellect by placing the forms in God – but their solutions remained somewhat unsatisfactory insofar as they left the forms in a kind of ontological limbo where the forms weren't precisely in God, because God causes them, but they weren't precisely in nature either, because, as external to nature, they cause nature. Bonaventure, however, while taking much from the Neoplatonists with regard to the relationship of the forms to God – i.e. especially the notion of the forms being pre-contained in God as their cause – takes a very different route in approaching the relationship between forms and sensibles. On this point, he breaks with the Neoplatonic tradition and instead turns to Aristotle – using Aristotle now to locate the forms ontologically in the natural world, in order to eliminate decisively the worry of the Neoplatonic hypostasis.

## 1. FORM, *ESSE*, ACTUALITY, GOODNESS

In this section, I would like to lay out the basic aspects of forms in Bonaventure's thought, i.e. how the forms are related to other principles such as being, actuality, potency, goodness, etc., before beginning a discussion, in the following sections, of how they relate to particular sensible things. The most foundational question here is whether the forms themselves have *esse* – and if so, in what sense. As we saw of Aquinas' position on this matter in the previous chapter, Bonaventure's position concerning a distinction between form and existence is likewise revealed by his answer to the question of whether or not angels have spiritual matter. Here, my method will be to look at the reasons why Bonaventure asserts that angels have spiritual matter in order to show how he is thinking about forms. This is to ask: Why does Bonaventure think an angel cannot simply be a form? One could perhaps explain Bonaventure's notion of form without delving into these arguments, but (1) they are standardly covered in the secondary scholarship on Bonaventure's forms and, more importantly, (2) they are addressed in such a way which often inaccurately presents Bonaventure's understanding of forms and of universal hylomorphism,

i.e. that the foundational position for his claim that angels have matter is that forms have *esse*. This presents Bonaventure's argument as being fairly weak, as the claim that forms have *esse* can easily be dismissed by maintaining a distinction between form and being/act, à la Aquinas – in which case angels could be pure form without being pure act or pure being. I will show, to the contrary, that the foundational position for Bonaventure's assertion that forms are *esse* and therefore angels must have matter is that forms are *universal* – a more difficult claim to knock down, particularly insofar as Bonaventure later in the *Commentary* provides a number of arguments for this position. With regard to Bonaventure's use of Aristotle in this question, naturally many of the foundational concepts (e.g., act and potency, etc.) which are at play here are Aristotelian, but what is most important is that the assertion at the foundation of these arguments for spiritual matter – i.e. that forms must be universals – is one which Bonaventure quite explicitly attributes to Aristotle. As for Bonaventure's more extended arguments for the claim that forms must be universals, again derived from Aristotle, these will be treated in the next section of this chapter.

To the question of whether angels have matter, Bonaventure answers in the affirmative, attributing to angels (and to rational souls) not corporeal but spiritual matter – a concept which comes down to him from the *Fons Vitae* of Avicbron, and which is often called universal hylomorphism. Bonaventure writes first of all: "I respond by saying, that it is certain that the angel does not have simple essence by the privation of all composition; for, it is certain that angels are composed in a multiplicity of ways."<sup>301</sup> Composition, for Bonaventure, is said in many different senses. The first type of composition relevant to angels is that angels are said to be composed because there is a distinction between themselves and their principle: "For [the angel] may be considered in comparison to its principle; and so [the angel] is composed as much as it is dependent upon it. For, that which is most simple is that which is most absolute..."<sup>302</sup> This is to say, there is a distinction between the angel itself and any of its principles or causes, e.g., there is a distinction between the angel itself and its own form or matter.

Now considering angels themselves as principles, i.e. insofar as they have causal efficacy in the world, they have composition in yet another sense: "Second, [the angel] is considered to have [composition] in comparison to its effect; and so it has components of substance and potency."<sup>303</sup> An angel, as cause, has a potency with regard to

---

<sup>301</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 90b. "Respondeo: Dicendum, quod certum est, Angelum non habere essentiam simplicem per privationem omnis compositionis; certum enim est, quod Angelus compositus est compositione multiplici."

<sup>302</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, pp. 90b-91a. "Potest enim considerari in comparatione ad suum principium; et sic in tantum est compositus, in quantum habet ad ipsum dependentiam. Simplicissimum enim absolutissimum est, et omne dependens hoc ipso cadit in aliquam compositionem."

<sup>303</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 91a. "Habet secundo considerari in comparatione ad suum effectum; et sic habet componi ex substantia et potentia."



a certain causal efficacy, i.e. its own causal efficacy with regard to a particular effect is not identical with the angel's own substance; the converse is the case with God, i.e. God's causal efficacy is identical with his own essence. To illustrate this type of composition in angels with an example: I am the cause of the tuna ragù I'm making for dinner. Certainly my effect, my ragù, is contained within me because the recipe is in my mind. And in this way, I and my dinner adhere to the Proclean notion that an effect proceeds from its cause, i.e. my ragù is on the stove not in my mind but still remains in its cause, i.e. the form of the ragù is still in my mind. Yet, my essence, what I am, is not "the form of my tuna ragù" – the ragù is simply something I have the potency to make. Thus, when I am considered as a cause, there is a distinction between myself and my causal efficacy, as there is with an angel – or else an angel could do nothing at all.

Considered as composed in the above ways, *secundum metaphysicum*, Bonaventure concludes that angels are composed of act and potency and, *secundum logicum*, of genus and differentia.<sup>304</sup> Bonaventure then draws the wider set of conclusions:<sup>305</sup> (1) with regard to actual being, angels have composition of *ens* and *esse*, i.e. they are each a being which partakes in being itself; (2) with regard to essential being, they have composition of *quo est* and *quod est*, i.e. what the angel is (its form) and the angel itself;<sup>306</sup> and (3) with regard to individual (or personal) being, they have a composition of *quod est* and *quis est*, what they are and who they are.<sup>307</sup>

Yet, none of these compositions amounts precisely to a composition of form and matter. Bonaventure approaches this final type of composition with caution: "But concerning the composition of matter and form, or material and formal composition, there has been doubt. Some want to say, that such composition is not present in angels, and there are in them [only] the compositions above stated."<sup>308</sup> Now here is his move. All of the above compositions indicate one thing about angels: they are

<sup>304</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 91a. "Habet nihilominus considerari ut ens in genere; et sic secundum metaphysicum componitur ex act et potentia, secundum logicum vero, ex genere et differentia."

<sup>305</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 91a. "Item, habet considerari ut ens in se; et sic quantum ad esse actuale est in ipso compositio entis et esse, quantum ad esse essenziale, ex quo est et quod est, quantum ad esse individuale sive personale, sic quod est it quis est. – Cum ergo angelica essentia dicitur simplex, hoc non est per privationem harum compositionum."

<sup>306</sup> This *quod est/quo est* distinction is found also in Alexander of Hales and Bonaventure's student, John Peckham, as well as many other medieval Scholastics in some form or another. See: Alexander of Hales, *SH* II, n. 60, p. 75. As Alexander writes: "... no creature is its own essence, nor does it have being (*esse*) from itself, but it rather depends on another; there in all creatures the *quo est* differs from the *quod est*; therefore, this common composition is in all creatures (... nullum creatum est sua essentia nec a se habet esse, sed aliunde dependet; ergo in creatura omni quo est et quod est differunt; ergo haec compositio communis est omni creaturae)." *Commentary on the Sentences* II, n. 59 a, p. 74 (my translation). For Peckham's position, see *Summa de Esse et Essentia* 7.

<sup>307</sup> The third of these would apply also to human beings, but not to any other creatures which cannot rightly be called "persons."

<sup>308</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 90a. "Sed de compositione materiae et formae sive materialis et formalis, de hac dubium est. Et voluerunt aliqui dicere, quod talis removetur ab Angelo, et sunt in eo compositiones prius dictae."

not simply one thing. They have composition in the sense of mutability “not only towards non-being but according to diverse properties, so there is the principle (*ratio*) of passivity, again there is a principle (*ratio*) of individuation and limitation, finally a principle (*ratio*) of essential composition according to their proper nature.”<sup>309</sup> Angels have all of the above different compositions within themselves and thus one cannot say that they are each simply and purely a form – precisely if we take a form to be a universal. To maintain that angels are forms, one would have to maintain not only that forms are potential with regard to the act of being, but that in a form there are also all of the above types of composition. It seems absurd to say that forms are composed of *quo est* and *quod est* – there is no composition in a form between that “by which” the form is and “that which” the form is, such as there is in any particular thing – i.e. there is a distinction, for example, between Rye the Horse and the form, horse, but there isn’t a correlate kind of distinction in the form, horse, itself. It is rather clear that angels possess actuality and potentiality not just with regard to being, but with regard to all of these other types of composition which constitute their mutability, as well as their particularity. Thus, all of the above ways of composition boil down to one composition: actuality and potentiality (i.e. matter and form).<sup>310</sup>

To be clear, what all of these arguments rest upon is not the claim that forms have *esse*, but the claim that forms are universals and therefore cannot have these types of composition which are peculiar to individuals, such as angels or cats – an angel cannot be an individual person and also the universal kind that it is, for this would amount to asserting, e.g., that animality itself could ever be an individual thing. This point Bonaventure finds most explicitly made by Aristotle in *De Caelo*, where Aristotle makes a distinction between the form itself (i.e. the universal) and the form in the matter (i.e. the form in the individual thing) – a distinction which we will see Bonaventure quite frequently shorthand by quoting the line, as he does here: “When I say heaven I mean the form, and when I say this heaven I mean the matter.”<sup>311</sup> Or again, using Aristotle to substantiate what it means for the form to be universal, he cites the *Posterior Analytics*, that “the universal form is by nature

<sup>309</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 91a. “Sicut, sic ostensum est supra, cum in Angelo sit ratio mutabilitatis non tantum ad non-esse, sed secundum diversas proprietates, sit iterum ratio passibilitatis, sit iterum ratio individuationis et limitationis, postremo ratio essentialis compositionis secundum propriam naturam.”

<sup>310</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 90a. “... et si composita est ex diversis naturis, illae duae naturae se habent per modum actualis et possibilis, et ita materiae et formae. Et ideo illa positio videtur verior esse, scilicet quod in Angelo sit compositio ex materia et forma.”

<sup>311</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 89b. “Cum dico caelum, dico formam; cum dico hoc caelum dico materiam.” *De Cael.* I.9. Duns Scotus also mentions this phrase: *Ordinatio* II, d. 3, p. 1, q.6, 202, p. 490. There is also a parallel text in the *Metaphysics* XII.8 1074a, where a similar point is made. Scotus uses this reference similarly in q.3. q.6. In this passage from the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle connects the heaven example with the example of Socrates, i.e. in Socrates there is a distinction between man (universal), Socrates’ humanity, and Socrates.

‘always and everywhere’” (i.e. not here and now).<sup>312</sup> The only way, then, to get around the position that angels must have matter is to assert that forms are not universals – or to be somewhat ambiguous about it, as Aquinas is – and then angels could each be one individual form (and thereby would be composed simply of act and potency but not of form and matter). However, as we will see Bonaventure further argue in the next section (again, using Aristotle), an individual or particular form is a contradiction in terms: forms insofar as they are intelligible must be universals.<sup>313</sup> Indeed, this would hold as a strong objection to Aquinas’ claim that each angel, as a form, is a species unto itself. To be a species is to be universal – i.e. to be applicable to many members of a species (e.g. equinity is no individual horse) – and no angel is universal, but is an individual thing, and moreover an individual person.<sup>314</sup>

The above discussion gives us not only Bonaventure’s claim that forms have *esse*, but also his more foundational commitment that forms are universals. The next step is to clarify the sense in which Bonaventure claims that forms have *esse*. While Bonaventure’s arguments for spiritual matter are often considered sufficient to assert plainly that Bonaventure considers the forms to have *esse*, I would like to delve into this notion that forms have *esse* a bit deeper. The first place I would like to look is Bonaventure’s response to the question of whether the image of God is greater in men than in women. His answer (thankfully) is no. His reasoning is as follows: “[T]he *esse* principally [of man and woman] consists in the soul.”<sup>315</sup> And soul is the form of a human being, and it is the same in man and in woman. Thus, he concludes “that man is not more an image [of God] than woman, they proceed from the image with regard to their *primum esse* [i.e. the form of the soul].”<sup>316</sup> Here, plainly, with regard to the being – the primary being – of man and woman, which is the form of the soul, there is no distinction.

---

<sup>312</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, pp. 89b–90a. “Si tu dicas, quod materia vocatur ipsa hypostasis, sive ipsum quod est; ego quaero a te de hypostasi: aud addit aliquid supra essentiam et formam, aut nihil. Si nihil addit, ergo non contrahit: ergo sicut ipsum universale est natum semper esse et ubique, sic ipsa hypostasis, sicut patet in divinis, quia person non addit supra essentiam, sed est ubique et immensa, sicut essentia. Ergo cum hypostasis Angeli sit finita et arctata et limita, et ita hic et nunc, necessario oportet, quod ultra formam addat aliquid arctans substantiale sibi; hoc autem non potest esse nisi materia....” *Post. An.* I.31.

<sup>313</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, pp. 439–442.

<sup>314</sup> Even if an angel were the only member of its species, it still is not the species itself. This position is argued against explicitly by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*, i.e. that no form can be an individual thing. He uses the example of the sun, which although being the only member of its kind (i.e. there are no other suns), is nonetheless still a member of a kind. *Meta.* VII.15 1040a28–1040b4. We will see Bonaventure use this text in chapter 7, when we discuss individuation.

<sup>315</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 16, a. 2, q. 2, p. 403b. “Ratio imaginis non est magis in viro quam in muliere quoad primum esse, sed tantum quod accidentalem proprietatem. Respondeo ad praedictorum intelligentiam est notandum, quod, sicut ex praecedentibus patet, imago quantum ad suum esse principaliter consistit in anima....”

<sup>316</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 16, a. 2, q. 2, p. 403b. “Rationes enim ostendentes, quod non magis est imago vir quam mulier, procedunt de imagine quantum ad suum primum esse, sicut intuenti patet.”

This assertion that it is the form which is primary being is more made emphatic in Bonaventure's further discussion of the nature of form and matter in themselves, and what each brings to the sensible composite. He writes: "The metaphysician considers the nature of all creatures, and especially substance [which has] being in itself (*per se entis*), in which is considered the act of being (*actus essendi*), and this is what the form gives [to composite substances]."<sup>317</sup> In contrast, the matter gives "existence (*existere*)" and "stability for things existing (*per se existendi*)."<sup>318</sup>

However, "to exist" and "to be" seem almost to be the same thing. But they are not: Bonaventure is making a distinction between the form's *being* (*esse*) and the composite's *existing* (*existere*). Here, we might say, the form is the being of the composite substance, while the composite is the existing of the form, i.e. precisely insofar as the form has entered into composition with other forms and matter. That is, while form considered purely in itself is being (*esse*) – and is always and everywhere – its existing in a composite (and the composite itself) presents the form in one particular spatial-temporal location – its existing (*existere*) here and now. The form of horse is not in one temporal or sensible place, it does not change, it simply is; the particular horse, however, exists in particularized times and places and is the object of sense perception. What the form gives to the particular horse is that relationship to the form's own act of being, and this grounds the particular horse ontologically and intelligibly in the universal (which exists and which is the object of knowledge). Yet, what the matter gives to the particular, and in fact to the form as well, is not being *per se* but a temporal and physical *existence* – something the form, precisely insofar as it is universal (i.e. always and everywhere), cannot itself provide. Accordingly, Bonaventure writes: "For just as the matter of corporeal things sustains and gives to the forms existence (*existere*) and subsistence (*subsistere*), so also does spiritual matter."<sup>319</sup>

We see the above notion that the form gives *esse*, while the matter gives *existere*, again in Bonaventure's argument that the rational soul must have matter (i.e. spiritual matter).<sup>320</sup> The argument is similar to that regarding spiritual matter in angels, i.e. that the human soul is composed and individual and therefore must have a material component. Within this discussion, Bonaventure clarifies the way in which *existere* is applied to substances which are spiritual, such as angels or human souls.<sup>321</sup> He brings out here that the difference between the form of the soul and oth-

<sup>317</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2, p. 97b. "Metaphysicus considerat naturam omnis creaturae, et maxime substantiae per se entis, in qua est considerare et actum essendi, et hunc dat forma."

<sup>318</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2, pp. 96b-97a. "Et stabilitatem per se existendi, et hanc dat et praestat illud cui innititur forma; hoc est materia."

<sup>319</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2, p. 96b. "Sicut enim materia corporalium sustinet et dat suis formis existere et subsistere, ita etiam materia spiritualium."

<sup>320</sup> There are a number of issues that arise from this position – particularly how the soul is united to the body. This, however, is the topic for a different book.

<sup>321</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 17, a. 1, q. 2, pp. 414b-415a. "Et ideo est tertius modus dicendi, tenens medium inter utrumque, scilicet quod anima rationalis, cum sit hoc aliquid et per se nata subsistere et agere et

er forms is that the soul is meant to *exist* (*existere*) per se, i.e. to have spiritual matter which renders the form-matter composite eternal (at least in separation from the body) like angels.<sup>322</sup> From this, we can see the contrast: other forms (e.g., tree) only have the capacity to take on physical matter and thus when they exist (*existere*), they exist as physical temporal things. Thus, even angels and the separated souls exist (*existere*), but they do not have being (*esse*) – rather, the title of *esse* is reserved only for the forms, whether they be forms of trees or forms of human souls or angels.<sup>323</sup> Thus, Bonaventure concludes that the rational soul has a “material principle, from which it has *existere*, and a formal principle, from which it has *esse*.”<sup>324</sup> Here again, we see the fundamental position is that forms are universal and not composed, and so anything which is individual cannot be a form and cannot have *esse* in itself. To have *esse*, something has to be universal.

To give a final statement of this position that forms alone are *esse*, let us turn to a question in the *Commentary on the Sentences* which we will see resurface a number of times: whether the seminal reasons are universal forms. Bonaventure answers no – the reason for which we will see momentarily in the next section. Forms for Bonaventure, most properly spoken of as universals, rather “embrace complete *esse*”;<sup>325</sup> thus he asserts, misquoting Boethius, “that the species [i.e. the universal form] is the total being of the individual.”<sup>326</sup> Again, we see Bonaventure’s stress that the form is the “being of” the individual, but is not identical with the individual.

Bonaventure then adds an important facet to this notion that form is *esse* – that the form is furthermore *bene esse* or (loosely called) *bonitas*.<sup>327</sup> The form is responsible not only for giving being to the composite thing but also for making it good – and in this sense it orders the composite *in finem*, towards its end. Bonaventure writes that the ordering of rational creatures “is according to a certain image [i.e.

---

pati, muovere et moveri, quod habet intra se fundamentum suae existantiae, et principium materiale, a quo habet existere, et formale, a quo habet esse.”

<sup>322</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 17, a. 1, q. 2, p. 415b. “Ipsa autem anima, cum sit rationalis, cum sit per se existens, aliquam compositionem habet, quam aliae formae non sunt natae per se habere, dum non sunt natae per se existere; nihilominus tamen ipsa anima simplicior aliis formis dici potest.”

<sup>323</sup> Here we can see that if this were not the case, not only angels would be forms but also separated souls – which would be an odd claim.

<sup>324</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 17, a. 1, q. 2, pp. 414b-415a. “... anima rationalis, cum sit hoc aliquid et per se nata subsistere et agere et pati, movere et moveri, quod habet infra se fundamentum suae existantiae et principium materiale, a quo habet existere, et formale, a quo habet esse.”

<sup>325</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 439b. “Ergo forma universalis, quae est species, est forma totius, quae complectitur totum esse, et quae est sufficiens ratio cognoscendi quantum ad esse substantiale.”

<sup>326</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 439b. “Dicit etiam Boethius, ‘quod species est totum esse individui.’” This should be referencing Boethius, *Libr. III. Comment. in Porphy. c. de Specie*. This line, however, is nowhere to be found in Boethius’ text.

<sup>327</sup> Form gives *esse* and *bene esse*. *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 2, dubia 2, pp. 51b-52a. “Respondeo dicendum, quod bonitas est duplex in creatura: una quae est ex forma dante esse, alia quae est ex forma dante bene esse. Prima est bonitas substantialis, quae non addit supra formam novam essentiam, sed solum relationem ad finalem causam, ex qua comparatione omne aliud a Deo habet esse bonum.”

of God] and according to a certain *bene esse*.<sup>328</sup> The former (i.e. the image of God) applies only to the rational soul insofar as it is caused immediately by God, while the latter (i.e. according to a certain *bene esse*) applies to all things and is that which makes things a vestige of God,<sup>329</sup> insofar as things are ordered *in finem*.<sup>330</sup> The notion that the form is the good of the composite is indeed another way of stating that the form is the final cause of the composite, i.e. that for which the composite exists. Put another way, the form is the “actuality and *entelechia*” of the composite,<sup>331</sup> a position for which Bonaventure relies on the authority (and terminology) of Aristotle, “for the final cause tends to be the greatest good and the end of the [other causes].”<sup>332</sup>

Here we find quite an Aristotelian take on an Augustinian equation of being and goodness. In the previous chapter, we saw Aquinas apply this being=goodness equation to God: God is goodness and being, and he gives goodness/being to creatures, and thus we have participation in the transcendentals. While, for Aquinas, forms are called the final cause (the end or *telos*) of the composite, this has little more than a nominal weight insofar as the forms have no existence in themselves until they are *actualized* by the composite. This is to say, they have no actuality in themselves independent from and prior to the actuality of the composite. God alone is actuality. Here, however, Bonaventure takes his cue from Aristotle and asserts that it is the *form* which has *esse* and which is the final cause, the good, the actuality, the *entelechia* of the sensible composite – not God immediately.

These preliminary remarks which Bonaventure makes in asserting that the forms are good, and that they make things good, insofar as they are final causes, is far from a radical Aristotelianism but would be worrying to an Augustinian. If God is goodness and being, then he should cause goodness and being in creation – and thus all things should participate in him via goodness and being, i.e. via the transcendentals. Isn't Bonaventure here going explicitly against Boethius' claim in *De Hebdomadibus* – which we saw taken up by Aquinas – that things participate in *God* via their being and goodness? And this is the worry brought out explicitly in the *dubia* which correspond to Bonaventure's claim that forms are the perfection of things as being the *bonitas* of things. Put plainly, the objection is as follows: Augustine says “insofar as we [i.e. creatures] are, we are good.” But, Bonaventure, you

<sup>328</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 16, a. 2, q. 1, p. 401a. “Attendendum autem, quod convenientia creaturae rationalis ad Deum secundum ordinem quaedam est imaginis, et quaedam de bene esse.”

<sup>329</sup> “Vestige” is simply to say that all things are a symbol of God, but vestige is less of a symbol of God than an image.

<sup>330</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 17, a. 2, q. 1, p. 401a-b. “De bene vero est, quod creatura, quae est imago, praepo-natur aliis, quae tenent rationem vestigii; et quod alia [i.e. quaedam bene esse] ordinentur in ipsam tanquam in finem.”

<sup>331</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 2, q. 1, p. 445a. “Sicut dicit ‘proprius actus habet fieri in propria materia;’ sed anima rationalis est actus et entelechia corporis humani.” *De An.* III.9 414a26-27.

<sup>332</sup> *Meta.* V.2 1013b27-29.

seem to be saying that things are good because of their forms. Forms are essences.<sup>333</sup> Thus, it seems that “we are good *per essentiam*, which is contrary to Boethius in *de Hebdomadibus*, who says that we are good by participation [i.e. in God].”<sup>334</sup> Now, let us recall Aquinas’ *per essentiam/per participationem* distinction in his commentary on Boethius’ *de Hebdomadibus*. Things are what they are *per essentiam*, i.e. a cat is a cat by virtue of its form. But things are and are good, true, etc. for all the transcendentals, *per participationem* in their cause (i.e. God). Aquinas here is adhering to the traditional Augustinian account.

Bonaventure, however, seems to have left God and the transcendentals entirely out of the picture and replaced God’s causal efficacy with that of the forms. This is to say, from an Augustinian perspective, Bonaventure seems to be giving too much causal power to the forms by letting them cause goodness and being in creation. But this is precisely what he wants to do, and he stands by his position: “[G]oodness is twofold in creatures: one is from the form giving *esse*, and the other from the form giving *bene esse*”<sup>335</sup> – i.e. the forms make things good in the first place simply by making them exist and, secondarily, the forms make things good insofar as the forms are the final cause of things.<sup>336</sup> The forms *are (esse)* themselves and give to the composite, *esse* and *bene esse*. However, of course, properly speaking, the forms are not *bonitas* – they are not goodness itself, but each is one good thing, which designates for members of a kind what it is that makes them good. This is true because the forms *are*, and therefore *are good*, but they are not goodness itself and thus, again properly speaking, do not give *bonitas* itself to anything. God alone is *bonitas*. Thus, Bonaventure clarifies the way in which things are good: “The first is the substantial goodness which does not add any new essence in addition to the form, but only a relation to the final cause [i.e. *bene esse*], from which by comparison all things have goodness [*esse bonum*] from God.”<sup>337</sup> This is to say, first of all, things are ordered to their forms, as their final causes, which give them goodness (*bene esse*) by giving them being and designating for them what they have to fulfill in order to be a good

---

<sup>333</sup> Although Bonaventure does not respond to this position in this vein, he could have said simply that forms are not essences – essences are peculiar to the particular composite, i.e. they are the form (as we will see) particularized in the composite. This position Bonaventure makes clear when he lists the different kinds of things which we may call substance: (universal) forms can be called substances, and in addition to particular things themselves, so can the essences of particulars be called substances. Naturally, quoting Aristotle, he writes: “Praeter enim illos quatuor modos, quos dicit Philosophus, quod substantia dicitur materia, forma, compositum, et essentia uniuscuiusque...” *In Sent.* II, d. 37 dubia 4, p. 877a. cf. *Phys.* II.1.

<sup>334</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 2, dubia 2, p. 51b. “Ergo videtur, quod nos boni simus per essentiam, quod est contra Boethium in libro de Hebdomadibus, qui dicit, quod sumus boni participatione.”

<sup>335</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 2, dubia 2, p. 51b. “Dicendum, quod bonitas est duplex in creatura: una quae est ex forma dante esse, alia quae ex forma dante bene esse.”

<sup>336</sup> We will address this point again when we discuss evil in the final chapter.

<sup>337</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 2, dubia 2, pp. 51b–52a. “Prima est bonitas substantialis, quae non addit supra formam novam essentiam, sed solum relationem ad finalem causam, ex qua comparatione omne aliud a Deo habet esse bonum.”

whatever they are. But, of course, God is in an absolute sense the final cause of all things, and thus goodness (*bonitas*) comes from him in an absolute sense, e.g., God is the final cause of a horse not in the sense that God is what it means to be a good horse, but in the sense that God is good, and the horse strives to be a kind of good – in wanting to be a kind of good (the form), the horse strives to be good (God).

Bonaventure then can easily address the worry from Boethius by saying “what is called itself good *per essentiam* is that good which is absolutely good and not dependent on another [i.e. God]. But in this way, no creature is good, except by comparison to God, and thus by participation [in God].”<sup>338</sup> Here, Bonaventure is indicating that the objection which is being brought against him in the *dubia* is implying a position too absurd for anyone to maintain, i.e. that anything could be essentially good other than God. Things are essentially whatever they are (i.e. their form). If we equate, then, the *esse* that the form gives with the final cause (*bene esse*) of the thing, i.e. that which directs it to be what it is and thereby makes it good, we can say that this goodness is essential insofar as the form gives being, but it is also accidental insofar as the form gives *bene-esse* which is in turn related to God’s supreme *bonitas*: “participation is not accidental with respect to the first goodness [i.e. *esse*], which is the form giving being, although it is accidental according to what is from the form giving *bene-esse*.”<sup>339</sup> This is to say, things are good because their forms make them good, and this is (only) with regard to their essence and their substance – and in this sense alone we say that things are good *per essentiam*, i.e. the essence of what something is makes it a good whatever it is. But this is not how we apply good *per essentiam* to God – we apply good *per essentiam* to God, as Boethius would, to indicate that the very essence of God is goodness. Thus, taking this (more proper) sense of *per essentiam* into account, if we focus in on just the goodness of things, participation in goodness has also to be said to be accidental because nothing is essentially good the way God is.<sup>340</sup> And in this sense we qualify what the forms give and call it *bene esse*, not goodness Itself (i.e. *bonitas*).

While sacrificing some of his strict Augustinianism, we can see how thoroughly clever this answer is – especially, by recalling my issue with Aquinas’ Fourth Way. My issue in that discussion was that designating God as the good and the sole cause of goodness does not ontologically ground comparisons among things of a kind but only comparisons among the kinds themselves. This is to say, I cannot ground

---

<sup>338</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 2, *dubia* 2, p. 51. “... quod ipse vocat bonum per essentiam illud bonum, quod est absolute bonum non ex dependentia ad aliud. Hoc autem modo nulla creatura bona est, immo ex comparatione, et ideo participatione.”

<sup>339</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 2, *dubia* 2, p. 51. “... quia participatio non est accidentalis respectu primae bonitatis, quae est ex forma dante esse, quamvis sit accidentalis, secundum quod est ex forma dante bene esse.”

<sup>340</sup> To put this another way, if we bring God into the picture, goodness among creatures is accidental; if we leave him out, and consider only the relation of the sensible thing to its form, it is essential.



my claim that Verdi is better than Puccini because the form, composer, has no existence unto itself,<sup>341</sup> and no goodness unto itself – hence, it is not a standard for (a particular kind of) goodness. What Bonaventure has done, quite to the contrary, is posit each form as a *bene esse*, which gives *bene esse* to each sensible, and he has posited God as *bonitas* itself which grounds these individual instances of *bonitas*. Thus, with reference to *bene esse*, which is one form, I can (finally) say Verdi is better than Puccini and this statement has ontological weight, because Verdi and Puccini really exist and so does the objective standard for *bene esse*, the form of the composer. Then, with reference to *bonitas* (i.e. God's goodness), I can also say a composer is better than a tree. Here, Bonaventure denies that more purely Augustinian position that God alone causes being and goodness in favor of an Aristotelian equation of form and final cause – yet with the classificatory addendum that each form is only *a* good not goodness itself. In so doing, he provides, not merely a logical, but an ontological grounding for comparisons between things of the same kind – a necessary facet of realism missing from Aquinas.

To turn now to one final aspect of forms, I would like to address the relation of the forms to number, i.e. their simplicity and unity. As we saw above, while God is and is goodness itself, forms have to be particular goodnesses – e.g., goodness qua cat. Or again, God is actuality itself, whereas forms are actuality in a certain way. While God is actuality and goodness itself, the forms are each an instance, a kind, of actuality and goodness. In what sense, then, are the forms simple, if at all? They are certainly limited in a number of ways. First of all, each is one finite kind of thing – e.g., equinity or humanity – and thereby finite with regard to its actuality and its being, and “in no way can be pure act, in no way can be infinite.”<sup>342</sup> In the sense that the forms are each one finite thing, we can say that forms are simple – if we take simple to mean limited, i.e. one instance of limited being, one kind of thing. Yet, there also is a sense in which they are not simple – but a sense which does not imply that they have any composition of principles in themselves, e.g., of act and potency. That sensible things are not simple is evident from the fact that they are composite in a plurality of ways, i.e. if we even just look at the most basic composition within them of limited being (i.e. form) and themselves as an individual sensible thing – something which can be said of any individual thing (e.g., angels,

---

<sup>341</sup> This is obviously more of an analogy than an example because there is no natural form for composer. It makes an easier example, however, than trying to say one man is better than another – insofar as it would take a good ten pages to define my standards.

<sup>342</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 43, a. unicus, q. 3, p. 772a-b. “Infinitem enim in actu est actus purus, alioquin, si aliquid haberet de limitatione et artactione, esset finitum.... Si igitur creatura, eo ipso quod creatura, aliunde est et ex nihilo, nullo modo potest esse actus purus, nullo modo potest esse infinita.” Or to put this another way, the form is the actuality of some particular, but not actuality itself: “dicendum, quod causa universalis, quae non est actus purus, indiget actualitate causae particularis.” *In Sent.* II, d. 1. p. 1. a. 2, q. 2, p. 29.

trees, horses, people, etc.).<sup>343</sup> By contrast, the precise way in which the forms are not simple is not because they are composed of principles in themselves, but insofar as they are the causes of the sensible things, i.e. they are participated in. Because they are causes, there is a distinction between a certain form qua this certain form and this form qua cause of something else.<sup>344</sup> Bonaventure indicates that forms are not purely simple by the fact that they can be in many *supposita*: “for essences are multiplied in *supposita*.”<sup>345</sup> This is to say, that even a form (or any kind of principle), while not *composita ex aliis*, is nevertheless *componibile aliis*<sup>346</sup> – i.e. while forms are not themselves composite, they compose other things and accordingly are not wholly simple by the fact that they are touched by their many participants. Put still another way, there is a distinction between, e.g., the form of cat itself and the form of cat being in any of its participants, as we will see now clarified in the next section.<sup>347</sup> Moreover, this discussion of how forms are not absolutely simple seems to imply the necessity of something which is really simple, which can ground the existence of forms – and of course this will be God, as we will see in the following chapter.

## 2. UNIVERSAL FORMS AND SEMINAL REASONS

Having designated forms as the being and goodness of things, we now need to get into the details of the relationship of forms to sensible things. Are these transcendent forms? Are they Neoplatonic? While we have certainly seen Bonaventure use Aristotle in developing his understanding of the forms as the final causes of sensible things, now we will see his Aristotelianism in full force. Although it is tempting to attribute the claim that forms have *esse* to the Neoplatonic character of Bonaventure’s thought,<sup>348</sup> we will see, as promised, that he pulls this concept rather out of

---

<sup>343</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 8, p. II, art. unicus, q. 11. p. 168a. “... ideo in omni individuo differt essentia et suppositum.”

<sup>344</sup> This is similar to, although not the same as, the notion that angels are composed because they are the causes of things, or my example that there is a distinction in myself between the recipe for my ragù in my mind and myself. The difference between the two is that there is a continuity with regard to intelligible content, e.g., the form of cat causes a cat. But when an angel causes, e.g., a flood, or I cause my ragù, the angel is not the flood nor am I my ragù, but the particular cat is simply a cat.

<sup>345</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 8, p. 2, art. unicus, q. 11, p. 168b. “... et ideo in omni individuo differt essentia et suppositum; multiplicatur enim essentia in suppositis.”

<sup>346</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 8, p. 2, art. unicus, q. 11, p. 168b. “Et iterum omne creatum aut est principium; et ita componibile aliis; aut principiatum; et sic compositum ex aliis...”

<sup>347</sup> The former Bonaventure will properly call the universal, and the latter the seminal reason or natural form.

<sup>348</sup> As I mentioned in the Introduction, this is the more common way of asserting that the forms have being for Bonaventure, e.g., Bettoni, *San Bonaventura da Bagnoregio: gli aspetti filosofici del suo pensiero* (Milan: Ediz. Biblioteca Franciscana, 1973), 127, as well as 148, where he connects Bonaventure’s seminal reasons to Plato instead of Aristotle – despite the fact that Bonaventure attributes the notion to Aristotle and does not even mention Plato. See also: Gilson, *La Philosophie de Saint Bonaventure* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1924), 98–101.

Aristotle's texts. Again, this is to say, that while the forms have *esse*, Bonaventure conceives of this *esse* very differently than the Neoplatonists did.

This brings us to a key distinction which Bonaventure makes between universal forms and the seminal reasons – and this distinction will better clarify how Bonaventure considers the form to be able to make the sensible thing be what it is and be intelligible as what it is. “Seminal reason” is, of course, an Augustinian term<sup>349</sup> – and the influence of Augustine on Bonaventure on this point has not gone unnoticed. In Augustine's thought, seminal reasons are brought in primarily to explain the appearance and transference of forms in creatures – i.e. forms coming to be in particular sensible things after the six days of creation, in which God was supposed to have made everything. This is to say, the point of the seminal reasons is to explain how, while secondary causes appear to cause new forms, the forms are really all caused by God himself – the secondary causes only bring forth the forms hidden in things as these seminal reasons.<sup>350</sup> Bonaventure, in a sense, adopts this schematic of causation, as we will see in chapter 7 – although he attributes it as much to Aristotle as to Augustine.<sup>351</sup> However, in the literature, what is often missed in Bonaventure's notion of seminal reasons is that they play another role. Until now, we have been speaking about forms as universals, but here Bonaventure posits a different kind of “form” – which properly speaking is not a form precisely because it is particularized, and thus he calls them not forms but “seminal reasons.” Insofar as they are particularized “forms,” seminal reasons function in a manner very similar to Proclus' irradiated potency, or incomplete substance – yet, of course, while not having access to Proclus' notion of an irradiated potency, he rather pulls a very similar concept out of Aristotle's texts.

Let us then look at what Bonaventure has to say about these universal and particular forms. First of all, he says of these seminal reasons that they are “natural

<sup>349</sup> Or better, originally Stoic, then Neoplatonic, then Augustinian.

<sup>350</sup> Augustine explains this in *Trin.* III.8, where he discusses whether or not wicked angels have the ability to do what they wish with the material world. Augustine states: “water and fire and earth are subservient even to wicked men ... in order that they may do therewith what they will, but only so far as is permitted,” meaning that any agent may only act upon the material world according to the manner in which God set up the material world when he first created it, i.e. the wicked cannot go against nature. Augustine then explains his view of this nature, against which no creature may act, in terms of the seminal reasons. These hidden seeds rest in matter only to be brought forth by secondary causes, whether good or wicked, still in accordance with God's first creation, which is in effect “dictating” to the secondary causes what is allowed according to the seminal principles in nature: “... some hidden seeds of all things that are born corporeally and visibly, are concealed in the corporeal elements of this world ... from which, at the bidding of the Creator, the water produced the first swimming creatures and fowl, and the earth the first buds after their kind, and the first living creatures after their kind.”

<sup>351</sup> For example, in *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, pp. 435b-435a, while relying on the authority of Augustine by citing the *Super Genesum ad Litteram*, he backs up his authority with references to the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, e.g., in relating the seminal reasons to intrinsic causes. *Meta.* IV.1. Even in the *Collationes* Bonaventure's use of Aristotelian language in describing the seminal reasons is not to be missed. *Hex.* IV.10.

forms”: “but seminal reasons are the natural forms.”<sup>352</sup> This seems uncontroversial at first glance, but it in fact marks Bonaventure’s notion of seminal reasons in distinction from that of Augustine – precisely because he makes this comment in response to the question: Was Eve made from the rib of Adam according to the seminal reasons? Despite the fact that Bonaventure attempts to assert that Augustine is unclear on this issue, Augustine’s answer to this question in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* is a yes. Why? For Augustine, the seminal reasons’ function is, as said above, to explain secondary causality with reference to the transference of forms from one sensible thing to another. Thus, if it seems that a new form, e.g., that of woman, was generated from the rib of Adam after the six days of creation, we can neatly bring in our seminal reasons to explain this: there was a seminal reason within the rib of Adam, put there by God.

But Bonaventure’s answer to this question is a definitive no. This is because his notion of seminal reasons is a bit less “miraculous” than the notion which we find in Augustine.<sup>353</sup> He asserts, contrary to Augustine, that seminal reasons are nothing more nor less than the natural forms – perhaps not universal forms, but nevertheless they still only may work according to their formal nature. A rib, however, is certainly not made by nature to generate a woman, i.e. does not have the natural form to do so – if it did, we would see this phenomenon of ribs generating women occurring in nature. But we don’t. Thus, Bonaventure concludes: “[I]f it is asked, whether woman was made from the rib [of Adam] according to seminal reasons, the response is no, because the rib, with respect to such a way of producing and with respect to such body ... does not have in itself anything except the potency of submission,”<sup>354</sup> i.e. a potency by which, if other intermediate causes (such as God) come along, one thing may become another. Bonaventure’s example for this type of potency is bread having potency to become a man’s body: one would not say that there is a seminal reason in bread to become a man, but only a potency of submission, that if it is submitted to a series of intermediary causes (e.g., a man eating the bread, then digesting it, etc.), bread may end up being the body of a man.<sup>355</sup>

<sup>352</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 436b. “Regula autem agentis increati est forma exemplaris sive idealis, regula vero agentis creati est forma naturalis; et ita rationes causales sunt formae ideales sive exemplares, rationes vero seminales sunt formae naturales.”

<sup>353</sup> Actually, it seems Augustine’s answer is the better one from a purely theological perspective because it explains precisely how God’s causal efficacy was communicated through the rib of Adam.

<sup>354</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 435a. “Rursus, si quaeratur, utrum mulier facta sit de costa secundum rationes seminales; respondum est, quod non; quia costa respectu talis modi producendi et respectu tanti corporis ex ea formandi absque additione non habuit nisi solam potentiam obedientiae.”

<sup>355</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 435a. “Sed attendendum est, quod illa potentia naturae ad effectus istos aut est propinqua et sufficiens, sicut est in semine deciso a lumbis ad generationem humani corporis; et sic dicitur proprie habere se rationem seminalem; aut est remota et insufficientis, sicut est in pane vel alimento, ut ex eo fiat homo; et sic minus proprie dicitur esse ratio seminalis respectu hominis producendi, nisi vale accipiatur. Quod autem sic est in remota dispositione respectu effectus, aut perducitur ad illum effectum mediantibus illis, ad quae habebat ordinem immediatum, aut immediate. Si mediante, tunc potest dici, quod effectus ille sit secundum rationem seminalem, utpote

Similarly, in the rib of Adam there was the potency to become the body of Eve, but only through intermediary causes (i.e. God). From this, we can see that Bonaventure is committing himself to a notion of seminal reasons simply and solely as natural forms – not as things hidden by God in nature in that precisely Augustinian sense by which seminal reasons often seem to work contra nature, such as the rib and Eve example. In a certain sense, one could say that Bonaventure is not too far from Aquinas on this point. While Aquinas rejects seminal reasons altogether, Bonaventure simply re-defines what they are, but keeps the name.

Now, inasmuch as Bonaventure considers these seminal reasons more properly to be natural forms, we need to look at what makes these natural forms different from universal forms – or put another way, we could ask here also why is the distinction between the two not simply a conceptual distinction. Fortunately for our project, precisely this question is asked in the *Commentary on the Sentences*: “Are the seminal reasons universals?” And Bonaventure’s answer to the question is “yes and no” – loosely “yes,” but more properly “no.” In his *respondeo*, he first takes a step back and clarifies: “[T]he seminal reason is an active power, inserted into the matter,” and then continues “and this active power is the essence of the form.”<sup>356</sup> The seminal reason, however, is “incomplete” (i.e. *esse in potentia*), while the universal form is “complete” (i.e. *esse in actu*).<sup>357</sup> Bonaventure then turns to the question of why there needs to be a distinction between this form which is in the sensible thing and the universal form. Why can we not simply say that the universal is the seminal reason – that the universal form is in and dependent on the sensible thing – and so when I know Socrates, I can know the universal form, humanity?

It is important first to clarify that there are two ways in which one can talk about “in-ness.” The first is that something can be in a whole and dependent upon the existence of the whole for its own existence – in this way, it is ontologically dependent upon the thing which it is in, or one could say, as Bonaventure does, “inserted into matter.”<sup>358</sup> A second sense of “in-ness” is that something can be “in” a composite in the sense that it composes the composite, but without being onto-

---

si panis comedatur et digeratur et convertatur in humorem, et postmodum in lumbis convertatur in semen, deinde in hominem.”

<sup>356</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 440a-b. “... quod cum satis constet, rationem seminalem esse potentiam activam, inditam materiae; et illam potentiam activam constet esse essentiam formae, cum ea fiat forma mediate operatione naturae, quae non producit aliquid ex nihilo.”

<sup>357</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 440b. “Satis rationabiliter ponitur, quod ratio seminalis est essentia formae producendae, differens ab illa secundum esse completum et incompletum, sive secundum esse in potentia et in actu.” Interestingly, Bonaventure here uses the same words as Proclus. Also interesting to note: Bettoni attributes this definition of seminal reasons as “incomplete” to Gilson’s interpretation of Bonaventure instead of to Bonaventure himself. Efrem Bettoni, *S. Bonaventura: gli aspetti filosofici del suo pensiero* (Milan: Ediz. Biblioteca Franciscana, 1973), 147.

<sup>358</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 440b. “... et quia omne quod est in natura, habet fundari in materia, tam formae universales quam singulares in materia habent esse.”

logically dependent upon the thing which it is in.<sup>359</sup> It is the in-ness in the sense of dependence which is at issue here and which Bonaventure ultimately denies can be applied to the forms considered as universals – the ontologically dependent in-ness he rather applies only to seminal reasons/natural forms.

However, this still has not answered the question: Why does he make this distinction between these two types of form (i.e. universals and seminal reasons)? Or, further, why can he not, like Aquinas, say that (individual) humanity exists in Socrates and in Plato and then one simply abstracts to the universal? Bonaventure first of all considers the position which does not make a distinction – or at least an explicit distinction – between the seminal reason (i.e. a particularized form) and the universal form, and he entertains it as a serious possibility: “For there are some who want to say that, because universals are not fictions (*fictiones*), they really and according to truth exist not only in the mind but also in nature.”<sup>360</sup> This is clearly a position which wants to be realist, i.e. does not want to deny being to the universals, but wants to say that they simply exist and have being only insofar as they are in matter: “[A]nd since all things which are in nature have been inserted into matter, so universal forms just as much as singulars, have being (*esse*) in matter.”<sup>361</sup> The form of humanity exists in both Socrates and Callias, albeit only as it is in the matter, and this is sufficient for us to know universals.<sup>362</sup> This brand of realism seems either not to make a distinction between a singular/particularized form, i.e. what Bonaventure calls a seminal reason/natural form, and a universal form, or it concedes that only the singular form exists external to the mind and the universal properly exists only in the mind, abstracted. Humanity, accordingly, only exists extra-mentally whenever there is a particular man, e.g., Socrates or Callias. Thus, when I know Callias or Socrates, I can know the (universal) form of man.

At first, Bonaventure admits that this seems not to be a bad solution, as it also finds support in *auctoritati, rationi, et sensui*. It is supported by the authority of the Commentator, and reason seems to support this as well because one can say that the “singular indicates being in act and matter is being in potency, and the universal form means in one sense being in actuality [i.e. when the composite is actualized]

<sup>359</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441b. “Forma igitur universalis non est aliud quam forma totius, quae, cum de se *nata sit esse in multis*, universalis est....” On the other hand, however, despite being in the many, it does not lose its status as actuality in itself by its conjunction with matter. See: *In Sent.* II, d. 13, a. 2, q. 1, p. 317. Or again: “... quod praesentia materiae non tollit actualitatem formae, maxime quando corpus multum habet de specie et parum de materia.”

<sup>360</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 440b. “Quidam enim dicere voluerunt, quod cum universalis non sint *fictiones*, realiter et secundum veritatem non solum sunt in anima, sed etiam in natura.”

<sup>361</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 440b. “... et quia omne quod est in natura, habet fundari in materia, tam formae universales quam singulares in materia habent esse.”

<sup>362</sup> This is not dissimilar to Scotus’ position that the forms only exist when they are contracted into individuals.

and in another sense, being in potency [i.e. when the composite is not actualized].”<sup>363</sup> Sense seems to support this position as well, since when we know, we proceed from what is more universal to what is more particular, as Aristotle says in the *Physics*.<sup>364</sup>

However, there are two main problems which Bonaventure sees with this position. Bonaventure targets these two problems in a two-horned critique of the above<sup>365</sup> – what one might want to call – quasi-realist or, perhaps, proto-conceptualist position. The first horn rests on the fact that it is impossible to place a universal form into a particular sensible thing, insofar as this would render the universal form particular and therefore not universal. It follows from this that if the universal form is to exist precisely as a universal, it must be ontologically prior to the particular – i.e. not “in” in the sense of “ontologically dependent on.” Our second horn: Bonaventure then argues that a particularized form is not sufficient to ground (1) any kind of human knowledge (even of the particular sensible thing) or (2) univocal predication.

First of all, why does Bonaventure consider that the universal cannot ever really be in a sensible particular? He refers us back to his responses to the opposing positions where he argues, on the basis of Aristotle’s texts, that it is impossible for a universal qua universal to be in a particular thing – again, remembering that the in-ness we are considering here is in-ness in the sense of ontological dependence. Bonaventure then provides six arguments, all of which show that one cannot posit that universal forms are dependent on this or that particular composite, e.g., that humanity is dependent upon the existence of Socrates of Callias, without rendering this universal particular – and thereby negating the very universality of the form:<sup>366</sup>

(1 and 4) He begins the first argument: “The philosopher writes in *De Anima*: ‘the universal is either nothing or it is posterior’ – but the seminal reason is always prior: therefore it cannot be the universal form.”<sup>367</sup> This seems to contradict effec-

---

<sup>363</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 440b. “Rationi etiam concordat, quia, cum singulare dicat ens in actu, et materia ens in potentia, et forma universalis quodam modo dicat ens in actu, et quodam modo in potentia; rectum videtur et congruum, quod materia perducatur ad formam completam mediantibus formis universalibus.” This is a particularly interesting line insofar as it shows how this opposing position would consider that the universal form and the complete form are indeed two different things. The complete form is alone achieved by the mediation of the universal form, not something equated with it.

<sup>364</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, pp. 440b-441a. “Sensui etiam concordat, quia, sicut vult Philosophus in principio Physicorum [Libr. 1, text 2. seqq.], progressus nostrae cognitioni assimilatur progressui naturae in sua operatione; sed nobis innata est via ab universalioribus ad minus universalialia: ergo consimiliter erit in natura.”

<sup>365</sup> Ockham makes a similar argument, using Aristotle, although he quotes instead the *Metaphysics* – and in a manner similar to Bonaventure, he argues against the existence of universals as being peculiar to the sensible thing while still predicable of the many: *Ordinatio* I, d. 2, q. 7, p. 236-7.

<sup>366</sup> In what follows, I have slightly changed the order of them for clarity’s sake.

<sup>367</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 439b. “Philosophus in libro de Anima: ‘Universale aut nihil est, aut posterius est’; sed ratio seminalis semper prior est: ergo ratio seminalis non potest esse forma universalis.” *De An.* 402b1-402b18.

tively everything which Bonaventure has said above about universal forms having *esse* – but he clarifies the type of priority meant here with his fourth argument:<sup>368</sup>

All working of nature is terminated in a particular (*hoc aliquid*) and concerns a particular; but the particular means the form with matter, but the universal means just the form: therefore, the universal form, likewise, neither is the principle of operation nor is it the terminus of operation per se; but the seminal reason means the principle of operation, then the seminal reason cannot be the universal form.<sup>369</sup>

Here, we can see that the priority of the seminal reason in the first quote seems to be with respect to the composite substance alone – i.e. its priority in the sense of being the operational principle in the composite, something which the universal does not and cannot do. Hence, in this sense, the universal is posterior – or nothing: the sensible substance does not begin as a universal nor end up being a universal, but it begins with being the particularized potency to be whatever it is supposed to be – and this is why the seminal reason, not the universal, is the operative principle in the particular sensible substance. While the universal, in this sense, is posterior, or nothing, with regard to the generation of particular sensibles, the universal nonetheless has a different kind of priority. For the universal form is what possesses *esse*, in the sense that it is, as Aristotle says, “always and everywhere.”<sup>370</sup> And it is precisely this kind of priority which prevents the universal from being in the sensible particular (i.e. in the dependent sense of “in”).

(2) We see this point reiterated in the second argument which, again, begins with the quote from Aristotle from *Posterior Analytics*: “‘The universal is always and everywhere’; but the seminal reason is with respect to *this* matter, in which it is made determinately: therefore, the seminal reason cannot be the universal form.”<sup>371</sup>

(3) Bonaventure’s next argument is with reference to predication. Here his citation of Aristotle is from *De Interpretatione*: “the seminal reason is not predicated of that of which it is a seminal reason... – but ‘the universal is predicated of singulars’: therefore, the seminal reason cannot be a universal form.”<sup>372</sup>

<sup>368</sup> Peckham likewise puts together the first and third of these arguments to explain each other: “the work of nature indeed is ended in the particular, although the intention of nature looks towards the universal. And thus, this man by generating man, generates man, just as Aristotle says that the universal is either nothing or it is posterior.” *Summa de Esse et Essentia* VII.2, in *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of John Peckham* (Marquette, WI: Marquette Univ. Press, 2023), 111.

<sup>369</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 440a. “Item, omnis operatio naturae terminatur ad hoc aliquid et est circa hoc aliquid; hoc aliquid autem dicit formam cum materia, universale autem dicit formam tantum: ergo forma universalis, secundum quod huiusmodi, nec est operationis principium nec est operationis terminus per se; sed ratio seminalis dicit operationis principium: ergo ratio seminalis non potest esse forma universalis.”

<sup>370</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 439b. “universale est semper et ubique.” *Post. An.* I.31.

<sup>371</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 439b. “Item, ‘universale est semper et ubique’ sed ratio seminalis respicit hanc materiam, in qua fundatur determinate: ergo ratio seminalis non potest esse forma universalis.”

<sup>372</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 439b. “Item, ratio seminalis non praedicatur de eo cuius est seminalis ratio – non enim potest dici, quod homo sit semen, vel quod corpus hominis sit embryo – sed



(5) Bonaventure's fifth reason (and sixth reason as well) shows the absurdity of the position that the whole of the universal is really in the particular. This line of reasoning relies on Aristotle's prohibition against a universal being present in a substrate, as found in the *Categories*. Bonaventure writes: "[I]f the seminal reason means the universal form, it is therefore either the form of the genus or the form of the species. If the form of the genus, then in man there is the seminal reason with respect to a donkey"<sup>373</sup> – to have the seminal reason of animality would mean that I have the active potency to become any animal. And this is obviously not the case. His next alternative is to consider the possibility that the universal form of the species is present in the sensible composite:

But this is the seminal reason of something (*aliquid*), which before it preexists in matter is the complete thing in act (*res completa in actu*): therefore before there is the form of humanity in matter, there is the complete thing. But this is false and unintelligible, that the form of humanity be in some [particular], and that [the particular] not be the complete thing: therefore, one may not think that the universal form is the seminal reason.<sup>374</sup>

Bonaventure's worry here is that the universal indicates the complete thing in act – the form of humanity is the whole of humanity. If the whole of humanity is in one man, this is unintelligible because one man is not the whole of humanity. Socrates is not the actuality of humanity. While the critical edition does not give reference to Aristotle here, I'll provide my own, where Aristotle gives the same two examples: "For man is said of the particular man as substrate, but is not in a substrate: *man is not in the particular man*."<sup>375</sup> Aristotle likewise does not allow the universal genus to be in the particular things: "Similarly, animal also is said of the particular man as substrate, but animal is not in the particular man."<sup>376</sup>

(6) We see Aristotle's *Categories* at work in the final argument as well, and again Bonaventure makes clear the absurdity of placing a universal form within the particular, this time as its operative principle:

if the universal form, with respect to the particular, were the seminal reason, then, while "this white" (*haec albedo*) means the singular form, and "white" (*albedo*) means the form of the species, and "color" the form of the genus, and "sensible quality" furthermore the more universal form,

---

universale praedicatur de singulari [cf. Aristot. I. Periherm. c. 5. (c. 7)]: ergo ratio seminalis non potest esse forma universalis." Aristotle, *De Int.* I.7.

<sup>373</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 440a. "Item, si ratio seminalis dicit formam universalem, aut ergo formam generis, aut formam speciei. Si formam generis: ergo in homine est ratio seminalis respectu asini...."

<sup>374</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 440a. "Sed illud est ratio seminalis alicuius, quod ante praeexistit in materia, quam sit res completa in actu: ergo ante erit forma humanitatis in materia, quam sit res completa. Sed hoc est falsum et non intelligibile, quod forma humanitatis sit in aliquo, et illud non sit res completa: ergo non est ponere, quod forma universalis dicat rationem seminalem."

<sup>375</sup> *Cat.* V.5 3a7-21. "ὁ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος καθ' ὑποκειμένου μὲν τοῦ τινὸς ἀνθρώπου λέγεται, ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν, – οὐ γὰρ ἐν τῷ τινὶ ἀνθρώπῳ ὁ ἀνθρώπος ἔστιν." Translation modified.

<sup>376</sup> *Cat.* V.5 3a7-21. "ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τὸ ζῷον καθ' ὑποκειμένου μὲν λέγεται τοῦ τινὸς ἀνθρώπου, οὐκ ἔστι δὲ τὸ ζῷον ἐν τῷ τινὶ ἀνθρώπῳ." Translation modified.

then nature, in producing “this white” (*haec albedo*), would proceed through the mediation of all of these: therefore, “quality” would be made before “corporeal quality,” and “corporeal quality” before “sensible quality,” and “sensible quality” before “color,” which is not intelligible.<sup>377</sup>

Here, again, Bonaventure is bringing out the absurdity of placing a universal within a sensible thing as a principle of production within it. In order to get at the “this white,” which properly is in the sensible thing, i.e. belongs to this particular white thing, nature would have also to create every universal form within the white thing proceeding from the most general to the most specific. This would amount first of all to producing the universal form of sensible quality and the universal form of color, and the universal form of white within this particular white thing – this again substantiates Aristotle’s prohibition that the entirety of, e.g., white be predicated (or in) a particular: “For example, white, which is in a substrate (the body), is predicated of the substrate; for a body is called white. But the definition of white will never be predicated of the body.”<sup>378</sup>

It is clear from Bonaventure’s arguments above (as well as his use of Aristotle in them), that he considers it impossible for the universal form to be in a particular thing, insofar as what is in a particular thing (i.e. in the sense of being ontologically dependent) must be particularized – if something is dependent upon Socrates, it belongs to him and is thereby particularized in him. With regard to generation, this must be the case since what is the cause of generation in a particular sensible thing must be particular itself, not universal – i.e. it must be Socrates’ humanity, in a proximate sense, which causes him to grow up to be a man, not humanity in general.<sup>379</sup> However, with regard to knowledge or predication, if what is in the particular sensible thing is itself particular, it is no real predicate or object of knowledge. With respect to the latter point, Aristotle writes: “Sense-perception must be concerned with particulars, whereas knowledge depends upon recognition of universals.”<sup>380</sup> The humanity that exists in Socrates belongs to Socrates – it is not the humanity in

<sup>377</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 440a. “Item, si forma universalis respectu particularis esset ratio seminalis; cum ergo haec albedo dicat formam singularem, et albedo dicat formam speciei, et color formam generis, et qualitas sensibilis adhuc formam superioris generis et qualitas corporalis adhuc formam magis universalem, et qualitas adhuc formam universalissimam; tunc natura in productione huius albedinis perveniret mediantibus omnibus praedictis: ergo prius faceret qualitatem quam qualitatem corporalem, et qualitatem corporalem prius quam qualitatem sensibilem, et qualitatem sensibilem prius quam colorem, quod non est intelligibile.”

<sup>378</sup> *Cat.* V.1 2a11-19 “οἷον τὸ λευκὸν ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ὄν τῷ σώματι κατηγορεῖται τοῦ ὑποκειμένου, – λευκὸν γὰρ σῶμα λέγεται, – ὁ δὲ λόγος τοῦ λευκοῦ οὐδέποτε κατὰ τοῦ σώματος κατηγορηθήσεται.” Translation modified.

<sup>379</sup> Of course, Bonaventure considers that humanity (i.e. the universal) is ultimately the cause of Socrates, but more immediately he considers it necessary that the incomplete seminal reason be present in Socrates as the principle from which he actually grows – i.e. it is the potentiality to become humanity which is more immediately the cause of him becoming a man, than is the actuality towards which he is aiming because, temporally speaking, he has the potentiality before the actuality.

<sup>380</sup> *Post. An.* I.31. 87b36-39. Bonaventure cites the lines just preceding this. I am adding this in myself.

Callias, it is not the universal, and thereby it is only perceived by the senses, not known by the intellect.<sup>381</sup> The universal definitions which we predicate of particulars can never belong to the particular. Indeed, given the quasi-realist position you cannot avoid reducing the being of the universal qua universal – not qua singular instantiated in matter (in which case it is no universal at all) – to having being *only* in the soul. Thus, “if one wishes to maintain this position, one would have to be able to avoid reasons brought up to the opposition, saying, that he is speaking of the universal which has being only *as it is abstracted in the soul*.”<sup>382</sup> To put this another way, if it is impossible for the universal to be in and dependent upon the sensible particular, then where does this universal, which really is a universal, exist? The only place that is left is in the soul. The universal only attains existence in the mind – and these universals are dangerously close to being *fictions*.<sup>383</sup> Or put in a perhaps kinder way, this position which attempts to posit the universal form as being in the particular ends up more or less constituting a conceptualist position.

This brings us, of course, to the further issue with the quasi-realist position, which Bonaventure now will target – i.e. the second horn of his wider argument which is now targeted not only at the implied conceptualism of the above position, but at the position of the “self-aware” conceptualist as well. Those who maintain this latter position explicitly assert that the extra-mental particularized form in Socrates or Callias is sufficient to allow the mind to abstract to the universal form, humanity, i.e. there is an ontological grounding for the universal in the mind, namely, this particularized form. This, however, for Bonaventure – as for Ockham – is impossible.

Here, Bonaventure’s argument against particularized forms grounding knowledge of universals is itself twofold: “[I]t is necessary to posit universal forms for the sake of *cognition* and of *univocal predication*.”<sup>384</sup> This is to say, a universal for Bonaventure is necessary not only for knowing the particular thing, i.e. by naming the universal of it, but also for being able to connect different particulars of the same kind. These arguments are again very similar to arguments made by Ockham, where Ockham shows that individual forms cannot ground knowledge – but to make the wider point that universals are only found in the mind and without grounding in the extramental particular. Bonaventure, however, is working towards a quite different goal: that because the individual forms cannot ground knowledge, there must exist

<sup>381</sup> This is, moreover, very similar not only to the problem brought out in the *Categories*, but to Plato’s sail problem in the *Parmenides*.

<sup>382</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441a. “Si quis autem hanc positionem sustinere velit, poterit declinare rationes ad oppositum adductas, dicens, quod loquuntur de universali secundum quod habet esse abstractum in anima.”

<sup>383</sup> Now, while I do not wish to assert that Bonaventure intends this argument to be targeted at Aquinas, it does apply neatly to Aquinas’ position. But, of course, it applies to many other thinkers (e.g., Avicenna). Ockham critiques a position strikingly similar to the one against which Bonaventure is likewise arguing. See *Ordinatio* I, d. 2, q. 8, pp. 271–272.

<sup>384</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441a. “Rationi quidem, quia necesse est ponere universales formas propter cognitionem et praedicationis univocationem.”

universal forms, independent from particulars and distinct from particularized forms/seminal reasons.<sup>385</sup>

To begin his argument concerning cognition, Bonaventure first asserts that when we know, we know the universal: “It is not complete cognition, if the whole being of the thing (*totum esse rei*) is not cognized; and it is not cognition unless it is through the form”<sup>386</sup> – a position he takes from Aristotle.<sup>387</sup> Here it is clear that he considers knowledge to be acquired by the abstraction of the form from the sensible thing. And indeed, we only know what a thing is, when we know its whole essence (i.e. the universal form), which is not only in the one particular but in many particulars:<sup>388</sup> “[T]he thing abstracted from matter [i.e. the cognized universal] itself may very well be in other things, which each have their own matter and form [i.e. seminal reason], just as the similitude of color in a mirror.”<sup>389</sup> Avicenna for Bonaventure seems to indicate this as well: “For he says, that the essence is nothing other than the quiddity of the universal thing.”<sup>390</sup> Knowledge being dependent upon this universal, which is in the many, is evident in the fact that I really only know what a particular thing is, not when I know the particular thing alone, but when I know the particular thing’s universal form, e.g., if I have access only to Socrates’ humanity, I cannot know either what humanity is or Socrates is. Respective of knowledge, we appear to ourselves to be working from a particular to a universal because we encounter the particular first.<sup>391</sup> However, we do not know what the particular is before we have connected it to the universal, and so we really know the universal first – even though the first thing which we do is connect the universal to the particular, i.e. name the universal of the particular. Or, again, I need to know more primarily what man is than what Socrates is, because I can only say what Socrates is (i.e. a man), once I know what man is. Thus, it is impossible to ground knowledge of a universal form in a particular

---

<sup>385</sup> One could say that while Ockham does not consider a form which has *esse* and is ontologically independent from sensible things and which is also not transcendent à la Platonic forms, Bonaventure does just that.

<sup>386</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441b. “Si igitur non est integra cognitio, nisi totum esse rei cognoscatur; et non est cognitio nisi per formam; ...”

<sup>387</sup> This point is found in many places in Aristotle. The Quaracchi editors cite: *De An.* II.2 and III.8, but the same point is made evident in the above quotation from *Post. An.* I.31 87b37-39: “Sense perception must be concerned with particulars, whereas knowledge depends upon recognition of universals.”

<sup>388</sup> Of course, here Bonaventure would mean “in” in the non-ontologically dependent sense because he is discussing universals.

<sup>389</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 17, a. 1, q. 2, p. 415b. “... res enim abstracta a materia propria bene potest fieri in re alia, quae suam habet propriam materiam et formam, sicut similitudo coloris in speculo.”

<sup>390</sup> Indeed, this is not quite accurate. Avicenna means that it is the quiddity which we know, not the universal in itself. *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441b. “Dicit enim, quod essentia nihil aliud est quam quidditas rei universalis.” Avicenna III. *Metaph.* c. 8., and IV *Metaph.* c. 1.2.

<sup>391</sup> Aristotle makes this point in *Phys.* I.1. While the particular is what we encounter first, what we know and what is prior is the universal. Interestingly, here, Aristotle is speaking more precisely about universal rules rather than definitions. In chapters 6 and 7 we will see Bonaventure connect the definition and the rules – identifying forms more properly as rules operative in nature.

form,<sup>392</sup> because quite the opposite needs to be the case: knowledge of the particular has to be grounded in knowledge of the universal. Thus, as Bonaventure writes, if we want to have objective cognition of anything (particular or universal), “it is necessary, that some form be that which embraces the whole *esse*; but this we call the essence and this is the universal form.”<sup>393</sup>

Bonaventure then turns to the second line of argument: that we need the universal really to exist also in order to make univocal predications – this argument is similar to the first, but while the first concerned knowing the particular and the universal, this argument concerns connecting two particulars together by virtue of a universal, i.e. that I can predicate of two particulars the same quality or essence, and this quality or essence means the same thing for both particulars. Bonaventure writes: “Similarly, it is not true univocation, except when somethings (*aliqua*) are *really* assimilated to a common form, which is then essentially predicated of them [i.e. of the *aliqua*]<sup>394</sup> He continues: “But this form, to which many assimilate, cannot be but the universal form; for what is essentially predicated of them, cannot be but the form which embraces them all.”<sup>395</sup> This is to say, if I only have access to the particular humanity in Socrates and the particular humanity in Callias, how can I say that they are *both* humans? Even if I could know Socrates’ humanity without the universal, I still would be knowing a particularized humanity, i.e. the humanity which I would abstract from Socrates would not be applicable to Callias. This consideration indeed strengthens Aristotle’s prohibition against the universal being in the particular: it seems plainly absurd to say that what Callias and Socrates assimilate to is already complete (*completus*) – the *totum esse rei* – in Callias and Socrates – particularly if Callias and Socrates are each assimilating to one and the same thing, how could it already be particularized in each of them? Thus, Bonaventure concludes: “The universal form, therefore, is nothing other than the form of the whole (*forma totius*), which, because born from itself it is in the many, is universal...”<sup>396</sup>

Of course, this form is “particularized” when it enters into conjunction with matter and becomes Socrates’ humanity instead of just humanity itself – but this

---

<sup>392</sup> Ockham would agree here, and – like Bonaventure – takes this to indicate that the conceptual position is absurd. However, of course, Ockham – contrary to Bonaventure – does not take this point to indicate that we have to attribute a *stronger* sense of being to universal forms.

<sup>393</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441b. “... necesse est, aliquam formam esse quae complectatur totum esse; hanc autem dicimus essentiam, et haec est universalis forma...”

<sup>394</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441b. “Similiter, non est vera univocatio, nisi quando aliqua in una forma communi realiter assimilantur, quae de ipsis essentialiter praedicatur.”

<sup>395</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441b. “Forma autem, in qua plura assimilantur, non potest esse nisi forma universalis; quae vero essentialiter praedicatur de illis, non potest esse nisi forma totum complectens.”

<sup>396</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441b. “Forma igitur universalis non est aliud quam forma totius, quae, cum de se nata sit esse in multis, universalis est...”

indicates the seminal reason, not the universal in itself.<sup>397</sup> This line of thinking should also remind us of Proclus seeing that it is necessary to posit a universal form to allow for members of a kind to all be named as members of the same kind, while simultaneously seeing it necessary to posit the individualized potency (incomplete substance) within them which makes each individually be what it is. We can recall the example of Eternity, Venus' eternity, and Venus, which correlates to the above example of Humanity, Socrates' humanity, and Socrates.<sup>398</sup>

Nonetheless, considering the difficulty of the task of establishing the existence of these universals, and taking the above arguments as a starting point, it would seem a much easier solution for Bonaventure to conclude, as Ockham does: there is no universal, and there is no grounding of my knowledge of the universal to be found in the particular, the universal is a name. But, of course, Bonaventure doesn't do that. Wanting to defend a realist account – but one which will withstand his own arguments – Bonaventure decides the better course to take is to work out a way by which one can understand universal forms as being independent from and ontologically prior to sensible things so that they can both ground the intelligibility of sensible things as really existing independently from a particular mind and ground the existence of sensible things as their cause. Here, the main difficulty is that Bonaventure has to resolve something which seems like a plain contradiction: universals cannot exist “in” particular sensible things, but they also cannot exist separately from them,<sup>399</sup> as the forms of Plato are – the latter position being one which Bonaventure quite plainly rejects.<sup>400</sup>

### 3. UNIVERSALS

We now have at play two different “kinds” of forms – and I use this term “kinds” loosely because I don't want us to think of Bonaventure's seminal reasons as entirely distinct from universal forms. This is to address precisely why Bonaventure answered the question of whether the universal is the seminal reason with “yes and no.” Here, before I delve into the texts, I would like to make a few preliminary and explanatory remarks about what Bonaventure is trying to get at in the following discussion.

---

<sup>397</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441b. “... particularizatur autem non per additionem ulterioris formae, sed per coniunctionem sui cum materia, ex qua coniunctione materia appropriat sibi formam, et forma materiam, sicut dictum est supra.”

<sup>398</sup> See the section on Proclus in chapter 1.

<sup>399</sup> He means this in two ways: that the universal has to be present in the sensible things and also that the universal itself is never without its composition in sensible things, but a composition which does not render it dependent upon its composition.

<sup>400</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter. *In Sent.* II, d. 1. p. 1. a. 1, q. 1, pp. 16b-17b.

First of all, recalling our preceding discussion, Bonaventure has asserted that the universal forms have *esse* – they are what exist. Often the issue targeted in the claim that the forms exist is the (implicit or explicit) position that the forms are separate – they are causes external to their effects. This, of course, results in a plurality of issues: the third man, the sail, etc. A solution to these problems is proposed by Proclus – and it is a fair solution. However, a necessary part of Proclus’ solution was to maintain these forms as a distinct and mediating hypostasis between the first principle and sensible things. And a Christian cannot maintain this position.

The first step of Bonaventure’s solution is one which we have already seen: to posit that the forms are the only things which really exist (*esse*). Indeed, this is crucial. Only the forms exist (*esse*) – the *existere* which sensible things have is only a highly contingent and dependent existence, i.e. no real existence at all. What Bonaventure means by this contingency is that sensible things exist (*existere*) only inasmuch as the universals compose them. This position then allows him to maintain that the universal forms can really exist as universals and that they are neither particularized nor rendered ontologically dependent by virtue of their being in composites. There are, as we have said, two senses of the word “in” at play here: one way in which the form is “in” as particularized, and another sense of “in” in which the form is an ontologically independent component of the particular.

The causal relationship which Bonaventure intends here between the universal and the particular composite, thanks to his insistence that the forms are never separate, is ultimately not Proclean, but Aristotelian – forms rather are conceived of as inseparable “components” of sensible things.<sup>401</sup> For as Bonaventure writes quite clearly: “And since the form is never separated from matter, it is never without [its] particulars.”<sup>402</sup> This is to say, it is not à la Proclus that the form, separate from the particular, causes the particular – with cause and effect being in two different realms of being. Rather, the type of causal relationship which Bonaventure is getting at here is rather more analogous to the causal relationship between bronze and the statue; it is the causal relationship of a component to a composite, however, a component which is independent from the composite and a composite which is dependent upon its components – the bronze can exist without the statue, but the statue cannot without the bronze.

What, then, of the distinction between the seminal reason (i.e. the particularized/singular form) and the universal form itself? Earlier, I noted that positing a

---

<sup>401</sup> As we saw above in our discussion that forms, while in a certain sense simple, nonetheless compose other things. Only God is simple in the sense that he is external to sensible things: “Si ergo simplicitas privet compositionem ex aliis, sic convenit etiam creatis, utpote primis principiis, quae non componuntur ex aliis. Et iterum omne creatum aut est principium; et ita componibile aliis; aut principiatum; et sic compositum ex aliis; et sic accipitur simplicitas, prout est rei proprietates, per privationem, videlicet, utriusque compositionis.” *In Sent.* I, d. 8, p. 2, art. unicus, q. 11. p. 168b.

<sup>402</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441b. “Et quia nunquam est forma haec separata a materia, nunquam est forma universalis sine particulari.”

particularized potency in distinction from the universal from sounded very Proclean. However, for Proclus, the relationship between the particularized potency and the form itself is indeed a causal relationship: there is an *ontological* distinction between the two. For Bonaventure, there is not. Bonaventure instead makes a distinction between the universal itself (which happens to be part of the composite) vs. the universal qua part of the composite – or better, we could say qua operative principle within the composite. This distinction, as he makes clear, is not an ontological distinction, i.e. these are not two terms distinguished as cause to effect. When it comes to our understanding these two notions philosophically, they are one thing which may be considered in two different ways, i.e. as a universal form or as a seminal reason. However, this distinction is also not *merely* conceptual. Bonaventure writes:

if the universal form is said properly, according to the thing which is ordered into a genus, which metaphysics considers, the seminal reason is not the universal form. If, however, the universal form is designated as a form existing (*existens*) according to an incomplete being in matter and indifferent and able to be produced in many, then one may call the seminal reason the universal form.<sup>403</sup>

This is to say, they are equatable only insofar as we consider the universal form as “existing in potency” in some composite, i.e. qua operative principle in some composite.<sup>404</sup> Thus we land at a distinction between the seminal reason and universal which is neither an ontological distinction, insofar as the seminal reason and the universal form are not *really* distinct, but also not a conceptual distinction, insofar as they do indeed exist in two different ways. The crux of the distinction is that the universal form really exists (*esse*) while the seminal reason has merely a contingent *existence*. Or put another way, insofar as the universal form exists (*esse*), it is distinct

---

<sup>403</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 442b. “... quod si forma universalis dicatur proprie, secundum quam res est ordinabilis in genere, quam metaphysicus habet considerare, ratio seminalis non est forma universalis. Si autem dicatur forma universalis forma existens secundum esse incompletum in materia et indifferens et possibilis ad multa producenda; sic potest dici ratio seminalis forma universalis.” It is difficult to say where the “indifferent” language comes from here. On the one hand, it could be from William of Champaux, whose doctrine is different from Bonaventure’s insofar as he does not maintain that the universal really exists, or it could be adopted from Avicenna. For more on William’s view, see: Peter King, “The Metaphysics of Abelard” in *The Cambridge Companion to Peter Abelard* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), 65–125. However, if this language is adopted from Avicenna (which would be the more interesting option), we can say that what Bonaventure proposes as a seminal reason is similar not only to Aquinas’ immanent (extra-mental) form, but also Avicenna’s (insofar as both Aquinas and Avicenna are themselves similar) – and thereby Bonaventure uses “Avicennian” terminology to describe his own form as “indifferent.” However, properly speaking, the form is indeed in itself universal – and the universal form is considered as “indifferent” in the sense that it is indifferent to the fact that it happens to be instantiated in this or that particular. And it is on this point where Avicenna’s account is not satisfactory in Bonaventure’s eyes. *Properly speaking*, for Bonaventure, the form must exist in itself as a universal – it is not dependent upon and immanent in sensibles to attain extra-mental existence.

<sup>404</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 442b. “... secundum quam forma universalis dicitur quaecumque forma existens in potentia.”



from the fact that it happens to exist (*existere*). This means that we neither have two entities nor two names for the same thing. We thus have a kind of distinction between these two terms which is neither conceptual nor real.<sup>405</sup>

Interestingly, Boehner provides a similar interpretation not of Bonaventure's relationship between the seminal reason and the universal form, but of Alexander of Hales' relationship between *quo est* and *quod est* – i.e. the “by what” something is and the “what” something is. Boehner asserts that, for Alexander, the distinction between the two is precisely a formal distinction. Bonaventure utilizes the notions of *quo est* and *quod est* in a manner very similar to Alexander – something which Boehner himself does not mention.<sup>406</sup> For Bonaventure, however, the *quo est* is precisely a seminal reason, while the *quod est* is the universal form – the seminal reason is that by which a sensible thing exists (i.e. the operative principle), while the universal form is what the sensible thing is (i.e. its definition). Thus, while Boehner does not connect his insight about the relationship between the *quo est* and *quod est* in Alexander to the – perhaps more developed – understanding in Bonaventure, his insight is an important one, insofar as it indicates that Bonaventure's view of the relationship between a universal and a particularized form is one which is foreshadowed in Alexander's thought – or rather, that this was an often utilized way of thinking about such a relationship in the Franciscan school.

Boehner, however, does not provide much evidence for the fact that Alexander *must* intend a formal distinction between these two principles – indeed, Alexander himself describes the relationship as *secundum rationem* (conceptual distinction), and Boehner then interprets this as a formal distinction insofar as he sees that it makes better sense for this not to be a *purely* conceptual distinction. However, Bonaventure, unlike Alexander, never says that the distinction between the two is *secundum rationem*. Moreover, for Bonaventure, it is much clearer that he must mean a kind of distinction which is neither real nor conceptual, albeit not necessarily a formal distinction per se. We can see this by referring to the above discussion of Bonaventure's prohibition that universals be in the sensible thing, in the sense of particularized in, coupled with his strong assertion that the forms never be separate from the sensible. Here, if Bonaventure did not intend that this distinction lies somewhere between the real and the conceptual, he would be contradicting himself

---

<sup>405</sup> Here, one could say, it is similar to Duns Scotus' formal distinction. It is also good here to note that Bonaventure does have a well-developed account of what a conceptual and a real distinction are. He indicates a conceptual distinction with the phrase *secundum rationem* (which we see more of in the following chapter, when Bonaventure applies this conceptual distinction to, e.g., God as final end and God as beginning). It is to be noted that he does not use this phrase in discussing the distinction between the seminal reason and the universal. For a study of the different types of distinction in Bonaventure, see: Sandra Edwards, “St. Bonaventure on Distinctions,” *Franciscan Studies* 38 (1978): 194–212.

<sup>406</sup> Boehner, *The History of the Franciscan School: Alexander of Hales* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publishing, 1943), 64. See also: *SH* II, n. 58–59, pp. 65–74.

with regard to one of these two positions: if the distinction were conceptual, the universal would be in the particular; if the distinction were real, the universal would be separated from the particular.

By way of illustration, let us imagine the form of “horse-ness.” And we have Rye the Horse. Things compose Rye, like flesh and blood and fur, etc. Yet, on a deeper level, forms compose him: horse-ness, four-legged-ness, mean-ness, etc. Although being one of his components, “horse-ness” which has “being in itself” can be distinguished from its own “being in Rye” – it can be distinguished from itself qua operative principle. This doesn’t mean that horse-ness isn’t composing Rye, it just means that horse-ness in itself is distinct from the fact that it is composing Rye. In the first sense, it is not properly “in” Rye, since we are not considering it as being in him. In the second sense, it is in him and its “being in him” is dependent on him. Of course then, if Rye dies (which hopefully will not happen soon), his components endure, but their “being in him” dies with him. The form of horse-ness endures, and we can find it composing (but not properly “in” in the sense of dependent upon) any other horse, such as Spirit or Alejandro – but the particularization of it in Rye is destroyed when Rye dies, just as the particularization of it in Spirit or Alejandro will die with them as well. But the universal itself is properly always and everywhere and so the destruction of this physical-temporal particularization has no effect on it.

Moreover, making clear this point that only the forms possess *esse* – i.e. that they are the *only* things which exist – helps perhaps to forestall any worry which would target the question of *where* the forms are. This would be looking at the situation from the wrong point of view, i.e. from the position that it is sensible things which exist and thereby we must locate forms among them. Indeed, while we can to a certain extent think of what Bonaventure has developed here as quite similar to Scotus’ relationship between universal forms and particulars, for Bonaventure, “being” is placed among universals not particulars. Accordingly, the question of where the forms exist is no longer applicable since Bonaventure considers there to be no real being (*esse*) among sensible things.

Here, someone could also pose an objection along the lines of the following: perhaps the forms do not need *this* particular composite, but they need *some* composite to exist, e.g., does not the form of the dodo bird no longer exist, since dodo birds are now extinct? No, indeed. While Bonaventure is not aware that species go out of existence, he is aware of a phenomenon which happens in the reverse: new species appearing after the world was created. On this point he responds that “all things were created at once, but were not all made at once,” i.e. that all things existed but did not happen yet to be made into sensible particulars – forms exist (*esse*) whether or not they happen to have a spatial-temporal existence (*existere*).<sup>407</sup> We can apply

---

<sup>407</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 12, a. 1, q. 2, p. 297b. “Omnes igitur Sancti in hoc concordant, quod omnia sunt simul producta in materia; et ideo concedunt omnia simul esse creata, sed tamen non simul facta.”

this notion now to our species which has gone extinct: what has happened with the form of the dodo bird is that even though it does not *exist* (*existere*) anymore, it still *is* (*esse*) – it always is and always is everywhere. It simply happens not to *exist* (*existere*) in particular dodo birds. In a certain sense, the fact that the dodo bird still *is* (*esse*) is evidenced by the fact that I can still know what a dodo bird is, i.e. I can have a concept of it in my mind, and so it must still *be* in order for it to be the object of my intellect – and indeed it exists (*existere*) when I think of it, or when someone describes it, in a certain spatial-temporal location. Indeed, there are a lot of things which we think of as existing, despite the fact that they lack a certain spatial-temporal instantiation. For example, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the old bel canto repertoire fell out of fashion and so, e.g., Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* was rarely performed, if at all, for a period of about fifty years. I nevertheless would not say that the opera ceased to exist simply because it was not being performed – precisely because ontologically speaking it is the opera itself which exists primarily, and the performances have an existence contingent and dependent upon the opera. Similarly, since the forms exist (*esse*) primarily, it is of no import with respect to the forms themselves that they happen not to exist (*existere*) or even to exist (*existere*).

This is sufficient for a preliminary explanation. Let us now turn to the texts: Bonaventure first of all makes explicit his division of the form into two – but per my above analogy, this division is based on the relation of the forms to the sensible things they compose. The universal, he clarifies, is “the *form of the whole* (*forma totius*)”; this is in contrast to the “*form of the part* (*forma partis*)” which is rather the seminal reason – (again we see neither an equation nor an ontological distinction between the two).<sup>408</sup> And we clearly need the form of the whole because: “Soul is not said with respect to one man, but rather with respect to man.”<sup>409</sup> Here, “soul said with respect to one man” (or here we could say, qua operative principle in one man) is the particularized form (*forma partis*), while “soul said with respect to man” is the universal (*forma totius*) – where the former is applicable to only part of the set of members of this kind (i.e. only to one man), while the latter is applicable to the entire set of members (i.e. to the whole). This is to say, when I designate soul as the form of a man, I know soul itself as something which is related to many men or to man in general (i.e. to the whole) – as we have already seen, I do not even know what a particular soul is, if I cannot relate it to the universal. But the universal cannot be (particularized) *in* the particular, rather this universal form is the form “which gives being to all, and this is called the essence of the thing (*essentia rei*), which embraces

<sup>408</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441a-b. “... est enim forma partis et forma totius; et universale non est forma partis, sed forma totius.” And again later: “... ergo forma universalis, quae est species, est forma totius, quae complectitur totum esse, et quae es sufficiens ratio cognoscendi quantum ad esse substantiale; et hoc melius tactum est supra distinctione tertia.”

<sup>409</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441a. “Anima enim non dicitur respectu unius hominis, sed potius homo.”

the complete being (*esse*).<sup>410</sup> And, of course, this is the form which “metaphysics considers.”<sup>411</sup> This is perhaps a key observation which Bonaventure makes: the universal and the particular forms appear to differ because they play different ontological roles, and so metaphysics considers the universal, and physics the particular form.

Bonaventure continues: “But the *form of the part*, which ... does not have being except through its reduction [i.e. into the sensible thing] is not properly speaking called the universal....”<sup>412</sup> Yet, again, neither are they ontologically distinct. There is still a kind of identification between the particular form and the universal, and in this way the particular form may, in a sense, be called universal by its rooting (*radicatio*) in the universal – but this is only in a highly general sense (*large*),<sup>413</sup> e.g., Socrates’ humanity is not distinct from humanity itself, except for the fact that the former is particular and the latter is universal.<sup>414</sup> This is analogous to how we would say that “humanity” and “the humanity in Socrates” both are and aren’t the same thing. Indeed, here we can say that the seminal reason (or particularized form) is the way in which the universal is considered to be in and part of composite things. The seminal reason, the relational aspect of the universal, allows the universal to be “in” the many (ontologically dependent and particularized), while the form itself is independent (“in” as the component of the composite, but still independent).

To summarize, there is a universal which really exists (*esse*) as the form of the whole and is independent from its composition, and it exists (*existere*) as the form of the part insofar as it happens to be in a particular thing and thus it acquires this relational existence (*existere*), i.e. *existens* qua seminal reason (singular form). The former (the universal) grounds our knowledge, and the being of the composite, the latter (the particular form) grounds the particular existence of the sensible thing. This latter point recalls Bonaventure’s assertion that it must be the particularized seminal reason which is the operative principle, not the universal.

Thus, Bonaventure’s universal forms, although they compose composite substances (and, indeed, qua parts or qua operative principles in the composite are dependent on the composite), are never, considered *in themselves*, dependent upon these composites. As Bonaventure writes: “But while one may not be without the other [i.e. the universal form and the sensible things do not exist separately from

<sup>410</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441a. “Illam autem dicunt esse formam totius, quae quidem dat esse toti, et haec dicitur essentia rei, quia totum esse complectitur...”

<sup>411</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441a. “... et hanc formam considerat metaphysicus.”

<sup>412</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441a. “Formam vero partis, quae in genere non habet esse nisi per reductionem, non est dicere proprie universalem...”

<sup>413</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441a. “... potest tamen aliquo modo dici universalis radicatione, cum illa est indifferens ad multa, quae possunt fieri ex ipsa; sicut causa dicitur esse universalis, quia potest in multa.”

<sup>414</sup> The fact that Bonaventure also does not consider the seminal reason here to be really a form comes to his aid in designating a principle of individuation: he denies that this individual form could be a principle of individuation precisely because it is not a form, and thereby circumvents the criticisms of a position à la Scotus where, e.g., Socrates’ humanity is still considered to be a form.

each other], they nevertheless are different from each other. For, while white may not be without a body, it nevertheless differs from body, whence inseparability does *not* mean absolute identity.”<sup>415</sup> The universal, white, *may* be in a composite, or it may not be, just as dodo bird may be in a particular dodo bird or not – it is the forms which have being, regardless of these contingent existences. Thus, Bonaventure asserts that the status of the forms as actuality and being is not taken away from them by this composition: “[M]atter does not remove actuality from the form...”<sup>416</sup>

Indeed, here we can say that what Bonaventure develops is quite different from Proclus’ forms which are “nowhere and everywhere” – i.e. everywhere inasmuch as the forms are participated in by all things in the sensible realm, but nowhere inasmuch as they exist separately. Rather, Bonaventure’s forms are indeed “always and everywhere,” because whether physical things come and go, the forms themselves are the natural order, and hence never separate from the natural order. This is Bonaventure’s decisive Aristotelianism. Moreover, is it not even correct to say that the forms are *separable* – because, like natural elements, or even matter, they would have no place to separate to. They do not ever need to be located outside of nature because, again, they simply are nature – keeping in mind that, on Bonaventure’s account, it is the forms which exist, not sensible things, and hence they do not *need* ever to be in any composite. Again, to make a comparison to Scotus, while Bonaventure makes a distinction between his seminal reason and the universal form which is strikingly similar to Scotus’ formal distinction, he nonetheless stresses the point that it is the form *not* the composite which exists – and this is where Scotus and Bonaventure part ways. Indeed, this insistence that it is only the universal which exists is the key point which marks Bonaventure in contrast from the later Franciscan thinkers, even though his anticipation of their positions tie him to them – and marks him, yet again, in contrast to the realists before or contemporary with him.<sup>417</sup>

What is perhaps also interesting to note is that Bonaventure very noticeably avoids calling the forms substances. We see this even when he calls the forms complete or incomplete – i.e. he calls them complete and incomplete but not complete

---

<sup>415</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441b. “Quamvis autem unum non sit sine altero, differt tamen unum ab altero. Quamvis enim albedo non possit esse sine corpore, differt tamen a corpore, unde inseparabilitas non ponit indentitatem omnimodam.”

<sup>416</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 13, a. 2, q. 1, p. 318b. “Dicendum, quod praesentia materiae non tollit actualitatem formae, maxime quando corpus multum habet de specie et parum de materia.”

<sup>417</sup> Here, one could also compare Bonaventure to Francisco Suarez. Suarez, like Bonaventure, Ockham, and Scotus, denies that the form exists separately from the individual. Yet, while Suarez’s solution, like Ockham, affirms that only the individual exists, he nevertheless considers that there is still a kind of unity made up of all of the many individuals which partake in a single form, i.e. an essential or ideal unity, which actually exists prior to the cognition of it by a mind. See: *Disputationes Metaphysicae* 6. However, it seems that Suarez’s position, to Bonaventure, would appear to be too close to the quasi-realist position. King also compares Bonaventure’s theory of form/matter and individuation to Suarez and Scotus: Peter King, “Bonaventure’s Theory of Individuation,” in *Individuation in Scholasticism* (Albany: Suny Press, 1994), 141–172.

or incomplete *substances* as Proclus does. The issue is that calling both forms and sensible things substances, implies two levels of substances and thereby two worlds, as Proclus does. However, “substance” for Bonaventure is not a term which applies only to the forms, but, as for Aristotle, it is a relative term which is context-dependent and thus, like being, can be “said in many ways” – i.e. as indicating “form, matter, composite, or the essence of each and every thing”<sup>418</sup> – depending on what is taken to be primary in a particular context (e.g., in physics, the composite would be primary and therefore the substance in this context).

Moreover, we can see, as mentioned above, that Bonaventure could also respond to the usual criticisms of the “separate” forms of the Platonists. Indeed, Bonaventure is clear that the forms never exist separately from sensible things – although, perhaps, it is more accurate to say that sensible things are never separate from the forms, precisely because the forms are themselves what exist, i.e. that the created order is simply these forms. Thus, Bonaventure can avoid the criticism of separate-ness – there is nothing for the forms to separate from and nowhere from them to separate to. Moreover, while the seminal reasons are separate from each other, e.g., as Callias’ humanity is separate from Socrates’ humanity, the form itself is never separate from itself insofar as it possesses no spatial-temporal location, nor does it need one in order to have being.

The lack of tiers of being in Bonaventure, as well as the fluidity of his use of the term “substance,” also anticipates the criticism of Ockham who, in objecting to universals which exist, takes existing universals to be in a very Platonic sense substances existing in themselves. Ockham writes: “Furthermore, I argue with the arguments of the Philosopher, by which he proves the conclusion that no universal is a substance, in the following way: the substance of a thing is proper to that of which it is the substance, and the universal is proper to nothing, rather it is common; therefore the universal is not a substance.”<sup>419</sup> It seems to me that Bonaventure would be happy with this claim – but would not see it necessary because of this to deny being to the universals. As Bonaventure himself quotes from Aristotle,

---

<sup>418</sup> “Praeter enim illos quatuor modos, quos dicit Philosophus, quod substantia dicitur materia, forma, compositum, et essentia uniuscuiusque...” *In Sent.* II, d. 37 dubia 4, p. 877a. cf. *Phys.* II.1. There are further ways which Bonaventure mentions substance may be spoken of, e.g., those he derives from Augustine: permanent and independent, permanent but dependent, inherent. He then adds himself that one may say substance of whatever is essential being in act (*qualibet essentia actu ens*), which either may be independent or not (e.g., when they are instantiated, the forms of rational souls are born to be *per se stans*, while the forms of trees, when instantiated, are not, as we mentioned earlier, because forms of souls have spiritual matter when they are instantiated, while forms of trees have only physical matter). He then equates the ways in which substance is said with the plurality of different kinds of beings: “et hoc modo substantia se extendit ad omne ens.”

<sup>419</sup> Ockham, *Ordinatio* I, d. 2, q. 7, 7-11, p. 237. “Praeterea, arguo per rationes Philosophi, per quas nititur demonstrare istam conclusionem, quod nullum universale est substantia, sic: Substantia rei est propria illi cuius est substantia; sed universale nulli est proprium sed commune; igitur universale non est substantia.”

“either the universal is nothing or it is posterior” – but Bonaventure considers that this claim is made from the point of view of sensible things. If we want to define substances as particular sensible things (e.g., Socrates or Callias), then forms would be no substance. Moreover, the rest of Ockham’s critique in the passage that I cited again rests on the claim that these universal forms would have to be substances in themselves and separate – two claims which are notably and emphatically absent from Bonaventure’s account of universals.

Indeed, we can by way of summary see how Bonaventure seems to anticipate, and even to agree with, many of Ockham’s arguments against realism or conceptualism. As we have seen, Bonaventure would agree with Ockham’s arguments that the universal cannot exist in (i.e. in the sense of dependent upon) a particular thing, and he would agree that the particular form is not sufficient to ground knowledge of a universal (i.e. one cannot simply abstract from the individual to the universal). He perhaps would also agree with the claim that the individual form is at least in some sense to be equated with the individual itself, e.g., Socrates’ form of humanity (i.e. the particularized form) is just Socrates.<sup>420</sup> Where he differs, however, is in that quick leap to nominalism. Instead he takes the above positions as the starting point for developing his own account of the way universal forms can compose particular things: while not being in themselves dependent upon particulars, their relation to the particular is certainly dependent upon the particular. In the former sense they are universal, and in the latter they are particular. And again, this is made possible because Bonaventure asserts that the forms are the only things which really exist: they can exist in themselves while their relationships to other forms and compositions is contingent. He thus can have his universals in the natural world, but ontologically prior to and independent from their compositions (i.e. sensible particulars). Bonaventure concludes his discussion of the universals by appealing to authority:

For this position agrees with authority. For the Philosopher says, ‘when I say heaven, I mean the form; when I say this heaven, I mean the matter’: therefore, the individual does not add form beyond the universal, but only adds matter. For Boethius says, ‘that the species is the whole being of the individual’: therefore, the universal form, which is the species, is the form of the whole, which embraces complete being, and which is the sufficient principle of knowledge (*ratio cognoscendi*) with regard to substantial being....<sup>421</sup>

While the Boethius quote seems to be non-existent, the Aristotle quote proves a useful one for Bonaventure to bring in here. It seems *prima facie* a bit of an odd

<sup>420</sup> Ockham, *Quod.* 5.11, p. 437-441.

<sup>421</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 3, p. 441b. “Concordat etiam haec positio auctoritati. Dicit enim Philosophus, quod ‘cum dico caelum, dico formam; cum dico hoc caelum, dico materiam’: ergo, individuum super formam universalem non addit formam, sed solum materiam. Dicit etiam Boethius, ‘quod species est totum esse individui’: ergo forma universalis, quae est species, est forma totius, quae complectitur totum esse, et quae est sufficiens ratio cognoscendi quantum ad esse substantiale; et hoc melius tactum est supra distinctione tertia.”

quote to insert since it is not obvious how this substantiates Bonaventure's twofold understanding of form. However, if we look at the full passage in Aristotle from which Bonaventure is quoting, we see precisely what Bonaventure has in mind: "Suppose for instance only one example of a circle were apprehended, the distinction would nonetheless remain between (1) the essential nature of the circle and (2) the essential nature of this particular circle. The (1) one is simply the form, and the (2) other is the form-in-matter and must be counted among the particulars."<sup>422</sup> From this Aristotle concludes: "This heaven and heaven in general are therefore two different things, the latter being distinguishable as form or shape and the former as something compounded with matter"<sup>423</sup> – the former, this heaven, is not itself the compound of form and matter, i.e. is not the composite itself, but that which is compounded with matter, i.e. the form considered as part of the composite, or what Bonaventure would take as the particularized form or seminal reason.<sup>424</sup> Or again, Aristotle writes: "In all formations and products of nature and art alike a distinction can be drawn between the shape in and by itself and the shape as it is combined with the matter."<sup>425</sup> This dual way of thinking about a (certainly not separate) form in Aristotle's thought seems to be what Bonaventure is drawing on here. "Essential nature of the circle" would be our form in itself and "essential nature of this circle" would be the form considered qua seminal reason/singular form.

Although one could very well say that the "essential nature of the circle" exists only in the mind while the "essential nature of this circle" is the only thing which exists extra-mentally, Bonaventure seems to be taking Aristotle rather to intend both as having an extra-mental existence – as indeed, given Bonaventure's previous discussion of the quasi-realist position, this is the only way to read Aristotle so that (1) Aristotle is a realist, and (2) that, as a realist, he is not contradicting himself.

It probably is also a good idea here, so as to forestall any objection to the way in which Bonaventure has used Aristotle to defend his notion of forms having *esse*, that of course Bonaventure is assuming a certain reading of these texts, particularly the *Posterior Analytics* and the *Categories*, and to a certain extent *De Caelo* as we saw above: that they have an ontological, not only a logical import. This, of course, has been questioned by contemporary scholars of Aristotle. Yet, Bonaventure's reading is not without its merits, and it probably would not have even occurred to Bonaventure to read these texts as purely logical: Aristotle says that the object of our knowledge is the universal, and so if Aristotle is a realist (and granted, this is

---

<sup>422</sup> *De Cael.* I.9 278a7-11. Aristotle makes a similar point in *Meta.* VII.15 regarding the sun, which we will see Bonaventure use in discussing individuation.

<sup>423</sup> *De Cael.* I.9 278a13-15.

<sup>424</sup> And here we see why he states that Augustine and Aristotle both agree when it comes to seminal reasons. *In Sent.* II, d. 15, a. 1, q. 1. p. 375a. "Haec positio rationabilior est et firmior, quia concordant in hoc tam Augustinus quam Philosophus." He then cites from *ad Orosium* and the *Generation of Animals*.

<sup>425</sup> *De Cael.* I.9 277b30-35.



an “if”), it seems that Aristotle must posit the universals as existing in some way. Indeed, to Bonaventure, the more common (still realist) contemporary reading of Aristotle would correspond to the quasi-realist position, and so Bonaventure is naturally giving Aristotle the benefit of the doubt by not attributing to Aristotle a position which Bonaventure considers to be self-contradictory – and that Aristotle would be a nominalist would be still further from his consideration.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

To bring this chapter on Bonaventure to a close, I would like to make a few points about the notion of form – as we have seen it developed thus far. First of all, I would like to comment on the parallel, which I noted briefly in the first chapter, between Bonaventure’s and Proclus’ solutions. Well aware, however (very much like Bonaventure), of the many absurdities which may result from this relationship between a particular thing and a separate universal form, Proclus saw it necessary also to posit a mode in which forms exist in the sensible world, in sensible things, as incomplete. Indeed, Bonaventure arrives at a solution similar to Proclus’ in the respect that, like Proclus, Bonaventure maintains two modes of forms: the particularized form which is a potency and thereby incomplete and the universal form which is in act and thereby complete. However, while Proclus does not relinquish the separate forms of Plato, Bonaventure does just this insofar as he understands these two modes not as being two distinct ontological terms (i.e. cause and effect), but as being one object under two relational considerations, i.e. in itself and related to the composite.

In so doing, Bonaventure, addresses the problem which Dionysius looked also to solve in his reception of a Proclean schematic, but he does so in a very different manner. Instead of eliminating the hypostasis of the intellect by attempting to move it up into God, he rather takes his cue from Aristotle and does quite the opposite: he identifies the forms with the created order itself – yet, he does so without depriving the forms of their ontological primacy, as Aquinas does.

Speaking of parting ways with the Neoplatonists, however, brings me to make a few points about the way in which we have seen Bonaventure’s use of Aristotle’s texts in developing his notion of form. The first is that I think it is fairly obvious from the foregoing discussion that Bonaventure is far from an anti-Aristotelian, particularly when it comes to his understanding of form. Indeed, I think it is fair to say that Aristotle is *the* source for Bonaventure when it comes to forms, the hylo-morphic composite, and his metaphysics/physics in general. And in this, it seems van Steenberghen’s position was not so absurd as it appeared, and still does appear to be, to scholars of medieval philosophy. Here, one might even ask the question: Where else would Bonaventure derive any notion of form? He has only Platonic/Neoplatonic texts and Aristotle – insofar as Dionysius and none of the traditional

Augustinian sources go into such detail regarding forms. And if Bonaventure is well aware of the issues of Platonic forms, to whom else would he look, if not to Aristotle? This issue regarding the Aristotelian nature of Bonaventure's thought seems to be in a certain sense responsible for why Bonaventure's notion of form, and to a certain extent his metaphysics in general, has not received its due attention in contemporary scholarship. Bonaventure's Aristotelianism and his understanding of form, as we have seen quite clearly, go hand in hand. If one is committed to turning a blind eye to Bonaventure's use of Aristotle, one ends up with either an overly Neoplatonic reading of Bonaventure's forms – and thereby an inaccurate and indeed uninteresting account, since it would end up with the same issues which the earlier Neoplatonists had – or one ends up skimming over Bonaventure's notion of forms altogether.

My next point regards the question of whether or not Bonaventure's reading of Aristotle is actually a good one – or, at least, a fair one. In contemporary scholarship on Aristotle – very generally speaking – an understanding of form in Aristotle as something vaguely along the lines of Aquinas' notion of form is considered the norm: forms do not have being in themselves but they exist whenever they exist in particular things, and so they exist extra-mentally and we have not committed Aristotle to a nominalism – yet. But, if we take as our starting point (1) that this position is self-contradictory and ultimately results in a nominalist position, and (2) that it is the job of the interpreter to give an interpretation which at least attempts to resolve any contradictions (i.e. to give the benefit of the doubt where possible), Bonaventure's reading of Aristotle indeed becomes more attractive. In a certain sense, so does Ockham's – insofar as, at least, both are consistent. Bonaventure's reading, however, manages to avoid the contradictions which arise from the inconsistencies in the quasi-realist reading of Aristotle, while likewise avoiding the nominalist reading of Aristotle (as one would find in Ockham). In this sense, then, highlighting Bonaventure's use of Aristotle is not only crucial for understanding Bonaventure's notion of form, but also provides insight into further options when it comes to contemporary interpretations of Aristotle.



## CHAPTER 5

# FORMS AS CAUSED BY GOD

*...et quia multa sunt cognita, et unum cognoscens,  
ideo ideae sunt plures, et ars tantum una.*  
Bonaventure, *In Sent.* I, d. 35, q. 3, p. 608b.

Having shown how Bonaventure understands the forms as *esse* and their relationship to sensible things, we now turn to the question of how Bonaventure grounds the existence of the forms in a first principle. The issue here – and this was the issue with which we saw the Christian Neoplatonists struggle in chapter 1 – is that this is decidedly difficult to do without hypostasizing the forms and thereby setting up a mediation between sensible reality and God. Bonaventure, however, has already made this job significantly easier for himself insofar as he has effectively denied existence to sensible things, except in the highly contingent sense of *existere*. Forms are the only things which exist, properly speaking, while sensible things exist only insofar as they are composed of forms. Thus, Bonaventure has eliminated the possibility of a three-tiered relationship of a first principle-forms-sensibles (such as in Proclus) and replaced it with a two-tiered relationship of a first principle to the forms. God, then, needs only to cause the forms.<sup>426</sup>

In this chapter, we will examine in detail Bonaventure's notion of God and how God causes the forms – and it is here that we will see more explicitly a Neoplatonic character of Bonaventure's thought. We first of all examine how Bonaventure, taking his cue from Dionysius, conceives of God as beyond-being, i.e. not as being as we saw in Aquinas (or in Augustine). Nevertheless, Bonaventure supplements this very Dionysian notion of God with Aristotle's descriptions of God, not only as goodness but also as actuality, incorporating also notions of causation derived from Aristotle. From the notion of God as goodness and actuality itself, two questions arise: (1) How does God cause via exemplars, (2) and how do these exemplars not imply multiplicity in God? Turning to the first question, we see Bonaventure develop a notion of the divine ideas, or exemplar causation – a notion which he derives from Augustine and Dionysius although fleshed out using an understanding of causation derived from Aristotle. We will then address the second question of the compatibility between maintaining both exemplar causes and God's simplicity. This is all to say, while we have already seen how the forms exist in nature, in this chapter we now will see how the forms, as effects, exist also in their cause: God. Thus, God,

---

<sup>426</sup> In the next chapter we will also show how God causes the particular compositions of forms with one another in sensible things.

as cause, ultimately is able to give an ontological grounding to the forms – as well as to the sensible creatures which they compose.

## 1. GOD BEYOND BEING

The first step in getting at Bonaventure's position that the forms cannot be *extra Deum* is to turn to his understanding of God's ontological status. Despite the fact that I have just emphasized the Dionysian character of Bonaventure's philosophy of God, nevertheless much of Bonaventure's understanding of what God is (i.e. his ontological status), as well as the notions of causation in general, is derived from Aristotle. Like Dionysius, Bonaventure conceives of God and his causality in a manner quite different from Aquinas. While Aquinas considers God to be being and goodness and thus the cause of being, goodness, and all other convertible terms (i.e. the transcendentals), Bonaventure considers God more properly to be a principle beyond being; and while God is the cause of being and goodness in an absolute sense, proximately it is the forms, as components of sensible things, which make things be and be good, as we saw in the previous chapter.

Now, to the point: Bonaventure stresses throughout his corpus that God's power (*potentia*) is infinite in actuality.<sup>427</sup> This, however, is not to imply an infinitude in God which is infinite in itself – which is always to imply disorder – but, rather, infinitude with respect to the effects of God's power: “[I]nfinity is said by the negation of limits”<sup>428</sup> – i.e. there is no limitation on the things which God can cause. God's infinitude then is simply “pure act and total cause.”<sup>429</sup> Thus, “he has in himself full and perfect actuality with respect to infinities.”<sup>430</sup>

Moreover, because (as we will see in more detail momentarily) ideas in God are multiple with relation to God's effects (i.e. the forms and their compositions), the ideas in God, like his effects, are also infinite in number.<sup>431</sup> If we number the ideas in God according to his effects, and his power is able to produce infinite effects, then we must also say that the ideas are infinite in number. Clearly, however, we ascribe infinity to

---

<sup>427</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 43, a. unicus, q. 2, p. 769a. “Essentia divina est omnino infinita in actu.” See also: *In Sent.* I, d. 43, a. unicus, q. 1, p. 765b. “Potentia divina est infinita in actu et in habitu.” And again: *In Sent.* I, d. 36, a 3, q 1, p. 628b. “Et sic cognoscit Deus, quoniam est actus purus et lux et veritas.” For an equation then of simplicity and *virtus*: *In Sent.* I, d. 72 p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 639a. “... quia summe simplex, ideo in infinitum virtuosissimum, et ideo virtus eius in omnibus; et virtus idem est quod substantia, et ideo necesse est, quod sit in omnibus.”

<sup>428</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 43, a. unicus, q. 2, p. 769b. “Ad intelligentiam igitur obiectorum in oppositum notandum, quod infinitum dicitur per abnegationem finis.”

<sup>429</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 43, a. unicus, q. 1, p. 765b. “Dicendum, quod divinam potentiam est ponere omnino et in act et in habitu infinitam; sicut probatum est per effectum a posteriori, quia habet effectum infinitum duratione et infinitos appositione, ad quos comparatur ut actus purus et ut tota causa.”

<sup>430</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 43, a. unicus, q. 1, p. 765b. “Et ideo est habens in se plenam et perfectam actualitatem respectu infinitorum; et necesse est, cum habeat totum, quod unquam habitura est, et ex se habeat, quod ipsa infinita sit.”

<sup>431</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 35, art. unicus, q. 6, p. 612a-b.

God only with reference to what he can cause, not with reference to God in himself – despite being the cause of multiplicity, he himself is one and simple. As we saw in the previous chapter, while the forms are each one thing – one instance of intelligibility, goodness, and being – and give to sensible things a distinct and limited being, they are not themselves wholly simple and unified.<sup>432</sup> God, however, is wholly simple and unified: “[B]ecause every unity is led back (*reducatur*) to the first unity ... it is necessary to place ‘one’ in God.”<sup>433</sup> We get a further picture of God’s ontological status when Bonaventure, arguing against a Neoplatonic emanation, gives us a summary of God’s causal efficacy:

But since he is singularly one, thereby most simple and most spiritual and most perfect; since most simple, he has the greatest power; since most spiritual, he has the most knowledge (*sapientiae*); since most perfect, the highest goodness; since most in power, he can make many things; since greatest in knowledge, he can know many things; since he is the highest goodness, he wishes to produce many things and communicate himself.<sup>434</sup>

The stress thus far for Bonaventure is equating God with infinite or pure potency in actuality, along with goodness and simplicity, which is not a highly un-Aristotelian notion of a first principle. Nor is it a highly un-Thomistic notion. Where is the point on which Aquinas and Bonaventure would disagree? In the claim that God is infinite *being*, as Aquinas considers – a claim which Bonaventure does not maintain. As we can see from our list above, “being” is notably absent.<sup>435</sup>

To understand why Bonaventure does not include being in his descriptions of God, let us take a step back. Forms are being (*esse*), but they are finite being, i.e. each is one particular thing. Why, then, do we never find Bonaventure assert that God is infinite being? The reason for this seems to be that Bonaventure asserts that God is infinite only with respect to his power – and his power is to create *beings* (i.e. the forms). It then would seem on the one hand redundant and on the other inaccurate for Bonaventure to attribute being to God as Aquinas does – i.e. in the sense that Aquinas designates God as being insofar as he is precisely and primarily a principle and cause of the *being* of his creation.<sup>436</sup> Redundant, insofar as in Bonaventure’s system one certainly could call God infinite being in the sense that God can make an infinite number of beings (i.e. forms), but this is to say nothing other than that God is goodness and infinite power. Inaccurate, insofar as, for Bonaventure, we

<sup>432</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 2, a. 1, q. 1, pp. 39-40.

<sup>433</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 24, a. 1, q. 1, p. 421a. “... cum omnis unitas ad primam unitatem reducatur, et non est reductio habitus ad privationem, necesse est, quod unus in Deo aliquid ponat.”

<sup>434</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 2, a. 1, q. 1, p. 49b. “Quia vero unice unum, ideo simplicissimum et spiritualissimum et perfectissimum: quia simplicissimum, maximae potentiae; quia spiritualissimum, maximae sapientiae; quia perfectissimum est, bonitatis summae, quia maximae potentiae, multa potest; quia maximae sapientiae, multa novit; quia summae bonitatis, multa vult producere et se communicare.”

<sup>435</sup> Indeed, so is being absent from Aristotle’s discussions of God.

<sup>436</sup> Naturally, for Aquinas, God is not called being in the same way creatures are called “beings” – nevertheless, God is a principle of being and this impacts what he can cause in his creation, i.e. primarily the being of things and only secondarily their essences, as we saw in chapter 4.

cannot call God infinite being in the sense of attributing to him any positive quality because he is neither infinite in himself, as we saw above, nor is he being (*esse*), since that is what the forms are. If the forms are (*esse*), a principle which causes the forms has to occupy a higher ontological ranking – it cannot be what it causes; and if it causes being, it cannot be being, even infinite being. As we saw in all of our Neoplatonic thinkers in chapter 1, implicit in the position that the forms have being (*esse*) is the claim that God is beyond-being.

Thus, like Dionysius, Bonaventure uses the name of the good as the most proper name for God, as we saw above, instead of using “being” with relation to God.<sup>437</sup> We see Bonaventure’s preference for the name of the good in a question where Bonaventure addresses in what sense God is the cause of things. He quotes Dionysius in calling God the good insofar as the good is the name that encompasses God’s entire role as cause: “[A]ll things desire the good as constitution and principle and end: as principle, that by which they are; as constitution, that by which they are governed (*salvatur*); as end, that towards which they turn.”<sup>438</sup>

Moreover, Bonaventure is emphatic on the point that God in himself is beyond all that he causes – as the cause of beings and objects of knowledge, God himself is neither a being, nor an object of knowledge; rather, he is beyond all intelligibility and all being. This position we see particularly in the last chapter of Bonaventure’s *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, where quoting Dionysius, he writes that to approach God is to “leave behind the world of the sense and of intellectual operations, all things visible and invisible.”<sup>439</sup> While one may approach God through different ways which are based in things which are intelligible to us (i.e. existing things – whether it be other creatures, our own souls, our sciences, etc.), to know God is to abandon all intelligibility and all being – to know the deity beyond all intelligibility and being. This is to say, while, for Aquinas, God was being and to know God is to know the most primary being (although this is a knowledge we do not attain to in this life, of course), for Bonaventure, to know God is to know not being, but “darkness, not clarity, not light but the fire...”<sup>440</sup> Effectively to know God is not to know at all. Very

---

<sup>437</sup> For this, he is saved from being condemned as an onto-theologian by Marion. Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 32-33. To the contrary, Gilson includes Bonaventure among those philosophers who affirm that God alone is *esse*. Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952), 37.

<sup>438</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 45, a. 2, q. 1, p. 804b. “Et hoc colligitur ex verbis Dionysii in quarto de Divinis Nominibus, ubi dicit, quod bonitatem ut continentiam et ut principium et ut finem omnia appetunt: ut principium, a quo sunt; ut continentiam, per quam salvantur; ut finem, in quem tendunt.” Dionysius, *DN IV.4*.

<sup>439</sup> *Itin.* VII.5 (p. 137). Dionysius, *MT I.1*.

<sup>440</sup> *Itin.* VII.5 (p. 137). Calling God both “darkness” and “fire” is a common description of God in Neoplatonic thought. Dionysius makes use of this imagery often. Proclus does as well, clearly drawing influence from the Chaldean Oracles where this language about God seems to have originated. See: Proclus, *Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles* 1.15-25. “Fire” refers to God in Neoplatonic thought due to the fact that he, like fire, fills all things. However, though God reveals himself as fire which we know,

aptly Bonaventure writes, continuing to cite Dionysius at the end of the *Itinerarium*, naming God: “O Trinity, essence beyond essence” and, again, “that One who is above all essence and knowledge.”<sup>441</sup>

## 2. EXEMPLAR CAUSATION

Turning now to our main topic of exemplar causation, Bonaventure has two main questions to answer: (1) What precisely is an exemplar cause, and (2) how do the existence of exemplars, or ideas in God’s mind, not imply multiplicity in God? In a question on whether there are ideas in God, Bonaventure responds with a yes and a no. The Quaracchi edition chooses to remove a short paragraph which is found in cod. Y, which is useful and seems, at the very least, to explain Bonaventure’s position, even if not in fact not written by Bonaventure himself:

Since according to the etymology idea is said to be from *ydos* (εἶδος), which is form; but form is said in a three-fold way: (1) it is that from which the thing is formed, as the form of the agent, from which precedes the formation of the effect; or (2) it is that for which something is in-formed, as the soul is the natural form of a man; or (3) it is that towards which something is formed, and this is the exemplar form, in imitation of which something is produced. And this third mode is the way in which *idea* is said....<sup>442</sup>

This stands with what we have seen so far about forms, i.e. they can be spoken about as being in the natural order either as (1) the universal form which is ontologically prior to the composition, or as (2) the particular immanent form which is ontologically dependent on the composition. However, when it comes to (3) exemplar forms, it is clear that Bonaventure needs to use form, or idea, in a different way: as that towards which things are produced, not something in any way involved immediately in the operation of production among natural things. Or to put this another way, the exemplar is a standard higher than the universal form which dictates why the form itself is whatever it is and how the form makes composite things be and act in whatever way they are.

The next questions should be: How do these exemplars exist in God, and if they are ideas in his mind, how does he know them? These two questions amount to the same thing insofar as these exemplars exist in God precisely as he knows them, namely, as divine ideas. Bonaventure first entertains the position that God does

---

he in himself is darkness; just as we only see things which are *on fire*, never fire in itself. Accordingly, Proclus writes: “the fire, that is the appearance of God, because it has its eyes directed towards the Father.” For a similar imagery in Dionysius, see *CH XV.2*.

<sup>441</sup> Bonaventure, *Itin.* VII.5 (p. 137).

<sup>442</sup> *In Sent.* I (cod. y). d. 35, art. unicus, q. 1, p. 601a. “Quoniam secundum etymologiam idea dicitur ab ydos (εἶδος), quod est forma; forma autem dicitur tripliciter: aut a qua res formatur, ut forma agentis, a qua procedit formatio effectus; aut per quam aliquid informatur, ut anima est forma naturalis hominis; aut ad quam aliquid formatur, et haec est forma exemplaris, ad cuius imitationem aliquid producitur. Et hoc tertio modo dicitur forma idea, et de hac quidam dixerunt, etc.”



not know his creation by means of ideal reasons (*ratione ideae*), but only by means of causal reasons<sup>443</sup> – here, taking “causal reasons” to refer to a pre-containing of an effect in its cause. Those who maintain the position that God knows only by causal reasons, not by ideas, “posit an analogy” – and this should sound familiar to us:

[J]ust as if the point were able to know its power, it would know lines and circumference; similarly, if unity has a cognitive power, through which it converts itself upon itself, it would know all numbers. And in this way, they say it is in God. For since God has the power to produce all things and he knows his power of producing all things, and he knows his power in its entirety, so God knows everything.<sup>444</sup>

This is in fact Dionysius’ analogy. Yet, the above is not quite Dionysius’ position – rather, it is a simplified version of Dionysius, and so Bonaventure rightly attributes it to interpreters of Dionysius, not Dionysius himself: “And *they* say that Dionysius means this when he says that ‘not according to the idea, but according to one cause of excellence does God know everything.’”<sup>445</sup>

Indeed, Bonaventure concludes that this is a bad analogy because it equates God’s knowledge of things with God simply having the potency to produce things. But producing and knowing are two different things: “[T]he reason of production is not the reason of knowledge.”<sup>446</sup> This position would imply that there is a distinction between God’s knowledge and his own power; or put another way that, in order to know his creation, God would have to make an inference from his own potency to the actual effects of this potency – but God rather knows things in “one simple look (*simplici aspectu*).”<sup>447</sup> Further, it seems, more importantly, that this position leaves out the component that there is a similarity between creation and God. On this position, it is only that the effect is pre-contained in the cause, i.e. God has the potency to produce things – this position does not account for the fact that the cause also has to be present in the effect. Indeed, the above position is missing the

---

<sup>443</sup> I’m refraining from summarizing the arguments and responses to the objections in their entirety, because this notion of how God *knows* by exemplary likeness in Bonaventure has received sufficient attention in secondary scholarship. Instead, I will just pull out the points which are important for my question of how God *causes* the forms by exemplars, i.e. my concern is causation not precisely God’s knowledge. For a summary of Bonaventure’s arguments, see: Junius Johnson, “The One and the Many in Bonaventure: Exemplarity Explained,” *Religions* 7, no. 12 (2016): 144.

<sup>444</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 35, art. unicus, q. 1, p. 601a. “Et ponunt simile: sicut si punctus cognosceret suam virtutem, cognosceret lineas et circumferentiam; similiter, si unitas haberet potentiam cognitivam, per quam converteret se super se, cognosceret omnes numeros. Per hunc modum dicunt in Deo esse. Quoniam enim Deus habet virtutem producendi omnia et cognoscit totam suam virtutem producendi omnia et cognoscit totam suam virtutem, ideo cognoscit omnia.”

<sup>445</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 35, art. unicus, q. 1, p. 601a. [continued from previous note] “Et hoc dicunt, Dionysius sensisse, cum dixit, quod ‘non secundum ideam, sed secundum unam excellentiae causam cognoscit omnia.’”

<sup>446</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 35, art. unicus, q. 1, p. 601a. “Rursus, omnis cognoscens ideo distincte producit, quia distincte cognoscit, non e converso: ergo ratio producendi non est ratio cognoscendi.”

<sup>447</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 35, art. unicus, q. 1, p. 611b. “Deus autem simplici aspectu cognoscit singularia ut diversa ita quod secundum totum et secundum proprias differentias et proprietates; ....”

mutuality of a causal relationship:<sup>448</sup> the effect is in its cause, and the cause is also in its effect. This mutuality marks the likewise mutual similitude between cause and effect, and it is through this similitude that God knows things as his creation, beyond just his potency to create things. Since, then, God is in his effects, he does not need to extrapolate from his own potency to the existence of things outside of himself – he is present in them and knows them thereby. Thus, what Bonaventure objects to here is not the attribution of a pre-containing of effects to God, but to the position that God knows things through, and only through, this pre-containing, i.e. that this position (1) considers the causal reason *only* to be a pre-containing of an effect in a cause and (2) considers God’s knowledge only to occur via this pre-containing,<sup>449</sup> which is impossible because the pre-containing is not a reason of (God’s) knowledge.

Bonaventure then asserts a more all-encompassing notion of God’s knowledge: “God knows through ideas and he has in himself the *reasons* and *similitudes* of things, which he knows, in which he knows not only himself, but those looking upon him [know him through them]: and these reasons Augustine calls ideas and primordial causes”<sup>450</sup> – here we see, then, both sides of the causal relationship between creatures and God: it is not only that God pre-contains his creations, but also that there is a similarity between creatures and God marked by a causal presence of God in his creation, i.e. the presence by which a creature is similar to its creator.<sup>451</sup>

Elaborating then on the causal efficacy of God, Bonaventure writes in a different question that things are contained in God, as cause, not just as a principle of pro-

---

<sup>448</sup> A mutuality which Bonaventure, however, does recognize in Dionysius’ own thought, albeit not in this particular interpretation of Dionysius – we will see how Bonaventure uses Dionysius momentarily.

<sup>449</sup> We will see momentarily that Bonaventure also maintains that God *does* know via a causal reason, but the notion of a causal reason is more complex than the above position paints it to be.

<sup>450</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 35, art. unicus, q. 1, p. 601a. “Ideo est alia positio, et secundum Sanctos, et secundum philosophos, quod Deus cognoscit per ideas et habet in se rationes et similitudines rerum, quas cognoscit, in quibus non tantum ipse cognoscit, sed etiam aspicientes in eum: et has rationes vocat Augustinus ideas et causas primordiales.”

<sup>451</sup> Augustine only once uses the term “primordial causes,” and the notion is not at all what Bonaventure is describing. Augustine mentions “primordial causes” in *In Gen. ad lit.* VI.x.17. “Sed haec aliter in verbo dei, ubi ista non facta, sed aeterna sunt, aliter in elementis mundi, ubi omnia simul facta futura sunt, aliter in rebus, quae secundum causas simul creatas non iam simul, sed suo quaeque tempore creantur: in quibus Adam iam formatus ex limo et dei flatu animatus, sicut fenum exortum, aliter in seminibus, in quibus rursus *quasi primordiales causae* repetuntur de rebus ductae, quae secundum causas, quas primum condidit, extiterunt, velut herba ex terra, semen ex herba.” This is – to my knowledge – the only occasion of this phrase in Augustine’s corpus, and it does not have the same sense in which Bonaventure is using it. Augustine is rather equating primordial causes with seminal reasons – something which, as we have seen, Bonaventure does not do. Seminal reasons are simply natural forms for Bonaventure, emphatically in nature, not in God. It seems more likely Bonaventure is getting the notion, as well as the term “primordial causes,” from some other source, probably some fragments of Johannes Scotus Eriugena (e.g., *Liber de Causis Primis et Secundis*), and equating them with Augustine’s primordial *reasons*. This is perhaps why he seems to use the two terms, primordial causes and primordial reasons, interchangeably.

duction, but rather in a threefold way: “(1) in the principle of production, and this is in the reason (*ratio*) of potency; (2) in the expressing of the exemplar, and so in the reason (*ratio*) of knowing, and (3) in the conserving end, in the reason (*ratio*) of will.”<sup>452</sup> This understanding of God’s causal efficacy however raises the question of what exactly he is getting at by saying that God is all of these different kinds of causes/principles. What is the difference between saying that God is a primordial cause, an exemplar cause, a final cause, etc.? Don’t all of these amount to a pre-containing of an effect in a cause?

While others turn immediately to Bonaventure’s discussion of God’s knowledge in the *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ* to explain exemplar causation, because my purpose in this chapter is to show how God causally grounds the existence of forms, I will rather turn to a place where Bonaventure fleshes out the different ways in which we speak of causes and reasons. This brings us back to that question which we never seem to be able to escape about Eve in the rib of Adam. In this question, Bonaventure goes into a long digression concerning the differences between causes, reasons, primordial causes or reasons, causal reasons, seminal reasons, natural reasons, and any other combination of those words one would like to make.

Let us look first of all at the distinction between a cause and a causal reason: “But cause and causal reason differ, because cause means the productive principle, but causal reason means the rule (*regula*) directing the principle in its operation.”<sup>453</sup> To put this simply, the cause is just the cause (which produces the effect), and the causal reason is the reason for the cause (producing the effect). We can use Bonaventure’s example to illustrate this: man generating man. First of all, we have our causal reason (i.e. our directing rule), which is universal: men generate men – this is clearly a universal rule which is dictated by the universal form, humanity, i.e. to humanity entails the ability to create more humans.<sup>454</sup> Then we have our cause, which is the particularized universal (i.e. the natural form or seminal reason): this man has the ability to generate a man. Now, Bonaventure notes, of course, there is another cause which is particularized even further: the semen which actually generates a man.<sup>455</sup> To be clear, while the seminal reason is still a kind of rule, albeit particularized,

---

<sup>452</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 36, art. II, q. 1, pp. 623b-624a. “Et propterea aliter dicendum, quod res tripliciter sunt in Deo, videlicet ut [1] in principio producente, et sic sunt in ratione potentiae; ut [2] in exemplari exprimente, et sic sunt in ratione notitiae; et ut [3] in fine conservante, in ratione voluntatis. Primo modo – quia in principio producente – cum totum ex nihilo producat Deus, nihil omnino sunt, nec vita nec aliquid.”

<sup>453</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 436a-b. “Differunt autem causa et ratio causalis, quia causa dicit principium productivum, ratio vero causalis dicit regulam dirigentem illud principium in sua operatione.”

<sup>454</sup> This general discussion of causes being universals or particulars is a reference to *Post. An.* I.31. The universal cause is the rule which is intelligible, as opposed to the particular cause which is only perceptible.

<sup>455</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 436b. “... sicut patet, cum homo generatur ex homine, vel arbor ex arbore.”

the semen itself is not in any way to be conceived of as a rule – rather, it is purely a particular cause of a particular man generating another particular man.

The causal reason, most generally, is the universal rule: (unspecified) men generate (unspecified) men. The seminal reason, in relation to the universal rule, is the instance of the rule actually occurring and thereby a productive principle: this (specified) man can generate another (unspecified) man. The semen, in turn, is the instance of the seminal reason, and thereby, in relation to the seminal reason, itself a productive principle: this (specified) man generates this (specified) man – i.e. were we to consider the seminal reason as the rule (e.g., this man can generate a man), the semen itself would be a cause (i.e. productive principle), in relation to this particularization of the universal rule. Thus, we can say, “The rule (*regula*) of the created agent [e.g., a man] is the natural form [i.e. the seminal reason].”<sup>456</sup>

Although, I claimed that this chapter would highlight more the Neoplatonic nature of Bonaventure, this division of causes is rather Aristotelian: i.e. the notion that there is a universal cause which is not properly speaking the cause of a particular, in contrast to a particularized cause which is, properly speaking, the cause of a particular. Aristotle writes, using the same example of men generating men: “For it is the particular that is the principle of particulars, ‘man’ in general is the principle of ‘man’ in general, but there is no such person as ‘man,’ whereas Peleus is the principle of Achilles, and your father of you, and this particular B of a particular BA; *but* B in general is the principle of BA regarded *absolutely*.”<sup>457</sup> In an absolute sense, the universal is the principle, but proximately, the particularization of the universal is the principle – or to use Bonaventure’s terminology, the particularization of the universal is, properly speaking, the cause, while the universal is the *reason*. I will present these relations of rules and causes in a table as well, for the sake of clarity especially because these relations will be further developed in the following chapter when we talk about causation and generation among sensible things:

causal reason, rule: men generate men (Universal)	
cause, productive principle: this seminal reason in this man (Particular)	(particularized) cause considered as a (particularized) rule of a created agent: this man can generate a man.
	cause, productive principle in relation to particular rule: the semen which actually generates a man

<sup>456</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 436b. “Regula autem agentis increati est forma exemplaris sive idealis, regula vero agentis creati est forma naturalis; et ita rationes causales sunt formae ideales sive exemplares, rationes vero seminales sunt formae naturales.”

<sup>457</sup> *Meta.* XII.5 1071a17-21. The Quaracchi edition provides a reference to *Meta.* XI.4, in which there is nothing on the topic of causation, but rather a discussion of what Philosophy should study.

We can likewise see these relations in the following table:

reason	(dictated by) universal form	seminal reason
cause	seminal reason (i.e. particularized form)	semen
effect	particular man	particular man

However, this discussion seems to apply only to the physical world – where would God or an exemplar cause come into play? After giving the above set of divisions, Bonaventure then divides causal reasons, as a general category, into two. Causal reasons can be either created, as our example above, or uncreated.<sup>458</sup> With regard to the uncreated causal reasons Bonaventure continues to say that the rule (*regula agentis*) of the uncreated agent is precisely the “exemplar or ideal form.”<sup>459</sup> Thus, the exemplar is not an operative principle by which some particular thing or phenomenon occurs, but is the *reason* for things occurring,<sup>460</sup> as we saw Bonaventure say also in the previous discussion that God knows by “*reasons* and similitudes” – but of course this reason which God knows is not with respect to men generating men, but with respect to the existence of the forms themselves being caused by God. Indeed, this is not to ask the question “what is the reason for this man generating a man?” to which the answer would be the universal reason “men generate men” (i.e. a universal rule dictated by the likewise universal form, humanity), but to ask the question “what is the reason for men generating men?” to which the answer is God, insofar as God is the good and reproducing is a good for human beings. This is to say, if we look at the broad relationship between creation and God: God, properly speaking is not the formal, final, and efficient *cause* of his creation – forms are the final, efficient, and formal causes of sensibles. God rather relates to his creation with respect to “efficient, formal, and final *reasons*.”<sup>461</sup>

This, however, might seem to confuse the relationship between uncreated and created causal reasons; since under one consideration God is a causal reason and the universal form is the cause, but under another the universal is the causal reason and the seminal reason is the cause – or, even further, the seminal reason is the

<sup>458</sup> Created causal reasons extend beyond the forms and seminal reasons to include other causes, such as will or desire, e.g., the cause of my tuna ragu is my cutting up the ingredients and putting them in the pan, but the reason is that I want to eat it. See: *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, pp. 435-437.

<sup>459</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 436b. “Regula autem agentis increati est forma exemplaris sive idealis, regula vero agentis creati est forma naturalis; et ita rationes causales sunt formae ideales sive exemplares, rationes vero seminales sunt formae naturales.”

<sup>460</sup> Moreover, Bonaventure is careful to distinguish these causal reasons from seminal reasons: “causal reasons are ideal forms or exemplar forms, but seminal reasons are natural forms.” *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 435. “... et ita rationes causales sunt formae ideales sive exemplares, rationes vero seminales sunt formae naturales.”

<sup>461</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 17, a. 1, q. 1, p. 412a. “Deus enim ad creaturas se habet in ratione efficientis et formalis et finis...”

causal reason and the semen is the cause. What we are seeing here is that these terms are not meant to be absolute, but relational. Thus, if we think broadly about creation and God, God is most properly the causal reason and the universal form is the cause; then if we take a step closer and cut God out of the picture, we can see that the universal form acts as a causal reason, and it is the particular form which is more properly the cause. Now, if we look at just the composite itself, disregarding the universality of its components, we can designate the seminal reason as a kind of causal reason and the semen as more particularly the cause.

The fact that these terms indicate relations lets us see the analogous relationship between God and creation (i.e. the forms), and the forms and the compositions. God is to forms as forms are to perceptible things:

reason	God	universal form	seminal reason
cause	universal form	seminal reason (i.e. particularized form)	semen
effect	the particular (form/composite)	particular man	particular man
	more particular	—————▶	

After having designated the different meanings of causes and reasons, Bonaventure begins to put them together into one picture of what an exemplar is. He makes a further statement that “[uncreated] causal reasons and primordial reasons are the same thing, differing only logically.”<sup>462</sup> The difference is: “For primordial reasons are said through their lack of priors, but causal reasons through the posterior position.”<sup>463</sup> Here, Bonaventure has redefined what a causal reason is in contrast to the (overly simplified) causal reason discussed in the earlier position (which named the causal reason simply as a pre-containing). For Bonaventure, “primordial reasons” designate God as pre-containing his effects, and “causal reasons” rather designate God as being the final end of all things: “[P]rimordial causes (or primordial reasons), insofar as they regard God as the first cause (*principium primum*); causal reasons insofar as they regard God as the final end, who is the cause of causes.”<sup>464</sup> The latter of these two (i.e. the causal reason or final end) is the more important since the final cause is considered to encompass all the other causes (i.e. as it is commonly called,

<sup>462</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 436b. “Et secundum hoc patet, quod rationes causales et primordiales idem sunt re, differentes sola ratione.”

<sup>463</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 436b. “Primordiales enim dicuntur per privationem prioris, sed causales per positionem posterioris;...”

<sup>464</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 436b. [continued from above footnote] “... et primordiales, in quantum respiciunt Deum ut principium primum, causales in quantum respiciunt Deum ut finem ultimum, qui est causa causarum.” “Cause of causes” refers to the final cause insofar as it is the most important cause, cf. *Meta.* IV.2 and *Phys.* II.9, *Liber de Causis* prop. XVIII. Aquinas makes the same connection between the final cause, God, and this term “cause of causes.” See: *In Meta.* V lect.3 (§ 782) and *In Phys.* II, lect. 5 (§ 186).

the *causa causarum*). These causal reasons moreover are properly *causal* reasons (more than primordial reasons are), because a cause is “not effective in its effect except for the sake of an end. Therefore, this means that the conjunction of the effective principle with its end is the causal reason in the effect...”<sup>465</sup> Here, we see why Bonaventure stresses the importance of the causal reason over the primordial reason, insofar as the causal reasons explain more properly how things actually come into being and how God is expressed in his creation: that is, by being the final cause of all creatures, he causes them to be, to enter into composition, to grow, and to be whatever they are supposed to be – and of course, with reference to God’s knowledge, this is how he knows his creation.<sup>466</sup>

To summarize the above causal relationship between God and creation: God causes the forms, and he causes them precisely in that *they* are causes themselves. Again, then, it is clear that there are not three tiers of causation – it is still the forms which cause things, properly speaking, but this leaves the question of *why* the forms exist and *why* they make things as they do. And the answer to this is the *reason* for their causal efficacy and their existence: God.

Bonaventure brings in Dionysius’ notion of God as (primarily) the good, which we saw earlier, to substantiate his own position that God, as exemplar cause and the final end of all things, is primary:<sup>467</sup> “[A]ll things desire the good as constitution and principle and end: as principle, that by which they are; as constitution, that by which they are made well (*salvatur*); as end, that towards which they turn. Whence ‘the divine love is an eternal cycle, from the best, for the best, and into the best.’”<sup>468</sup> Here, we can see that while Bonaventure is drawing heavily on Aristotle’s notion of causation, the basic position that God has to be understood as the good for all things Bonaventure attributes to Dionysius – he could, however, have easily attributed it to Aristotle. In the above, we can sort out the Dionysian from the Aristotelian insofar as, in Aristotle, there is not developed to such an extent the position that God is in some way constituting and governing sensible things, nor is there at all the notion that effects are contained in God – this Bonaventure quite clearly takes from Dionysius. From Aristotle, however, Bonaventure can take the more technical causal terminology and use it to flesh out Dionysius’ position – most importantly

<sup>465</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 45, a. 2, q. 1, p. 804b. “Effectivum autem non fit efficiens in effectu nisi propter finem. Illud ergo, quod dicit coniunctionem principii effectivi cum fine, est ratio causandi in effectu...”

<sup>466</sup> God knows things not only inasmuch as they are pre-contained in him, i.e. as he knows himself to have the power to make things, but inasmuch as he is the final cause of them, the *causa causarum*. This means that he knows himself as the cause of things existing externally to himself – and he does not have to make an inference from his own potency to the existence of his effects.

<sup>467</sup> Bonaventure’s use of this notion in Dionysius shows how the previous interpretation of Dionysius was an oversimplification.

<sup>468</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 45, a. 2, q. 1, pp. 804b-805a. Dionysius, *DNIV.4*. “Et hoc colligitur ex verbis Dionysii in quarto de Divinis Nominibus, ubi dicit, quod ‘bonitatem ut continentiam et ut principium et ut finem omnia appetunt: ut principium, a quo sunt; ut continentiam, per quam salvantur; ut finem, in quem tendunt.’ Unde ‘divinus amor est quidam cyclus aeternus, ex optimo, per optimum et in optimum.’”

in developing the relationships between causes and reasons. Yet, Bonaventure does not move far from either of his influences here, insofar as the position which he ultimately arrives at is, on a foundational level, in accordance with both.

### 3. A MULTIPLICITY OF IDEAS?

We are still left, however, with the question about the multiplicity of ideas in God. The preceding discussion perhaps paints the picture that there are as many ideas in God's mind as there are forms in the sensible world. Indeed, it seems as if we have just doubled the forms, but placed them now in God, as exemplars, and we haven't yet reached a one single cause of the forms. Bonaventure responds to an objection along these lines: "The ideas in God are the divine truth, and so in reality (*secundum rem*), they are one idea."<sup>469</sup> The objection states that the notion of ideas would imply plurality of forms in God, and to this Bonaventure writes that form can be said in a twofold way: "the form which is the perfection of the thing and [the form which is] the exemplar form."<sup>470</sup> The form which is the perfection of the thing is simply the form which has *esse*. The exemplar form is God. While the form functions as the perfection of the sensible thing, the exemplar form functions as that to which the form has a similitude – and since God is the exemplar and God is perfect, we can say that this exemplar form is the perfection relative to the form (my extrapolation). Even though forms are multiple, however, they do not imply multiplicity on the part of this exemplar (i.e. God) – in fact the opposite. The exemplar appears to be multiple only because it is similar to many things, or many things are similar to it. Yet, this does not mean that the exemplar itself is many. As Bonaventure writes, from the relationship of similitude, one cannot think that "in the ideas there is a real (*secundum rem*) plurality or [there is a plurality] according to what they are (*secundum id quod sunt*), but only according to that towards which they are (*id ad quod sunt*),"<sup>471</sup> i.e. the exemplars are multiple only according to the many to which they are related by virtue of a similitude.

To put this another way, "the ideas are many, the art is one."<sup>472</sup> This, of course, should make one think of the well-known analogy of an artisan to describe the way in which one God can generate a multiplicity in his creation. It is an analogy used even by those who do not explicitly maintain a doctrine of exemplarism (e.g.,

<sup>469</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 35, a. unicus, q. 2, p. 605b. "Ideae in Deo sunt ipsa divina veritas, et ideo secundum rem est una idea."

<sup>470</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 35, a. unicus, q. 2, p. 606a. "Ad illud ergo quod obiicitur, quod sunt formae; dicendum, quod forma duplex est, scilicet forma, quae est perfectio rei, et forma exemplaris."

<sup>471</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 35, a. unicus, q. 2, p. 606a. "... Et ideo, quia forma dicit ut ad alterum, sicut similitudo, quando dicuntur plures formae, non ex hoc notatur, quod in ideis sit pluralitas secundum rem sive secundum id quod sunt, sed secundum id ad quod sunt."

<sup>472</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 35, q. 3, p. 608b. "et quia multa sunt cognita, et unum cognoscens, ideo ideae sunt plures, et ars tantum una." Bonaventure calls God an "art" also in the *Collationes. Hex. XII.12.*



Aquinas). What Aquinas does have, however, is a doctrine of transcendentals – to which the analogy neatly applies. Indeed, here one might wonder what has happened to a doctrine of transcendentals in Bonaventure’s thought. I would like in one sense to deny and in another sense super-apply a doctrine of transcendentals to Bonaventure.<sup>473</sup> While being more or less drops out of the picture in Bonaventure’s understanding of God, God’s status as goodness and pure act/potency is rather emphasized. Thus, on the one hand, the very Augustinian equation, which is preserved in Aquinas, of God as being, goodness, etc. is not to be found in Bonaventure. For Aquinas, because God is being and goodness, he causes being and goodness in creation, and thereby we have our transcendental properties among creatures. Accordingly, God is like an artisan who has in his mind an idea, the good (i.e. an idea of himself), and, in turn, he creates creatures which are good and exist.

In Bonaventure’s schematic, on the other hand, it makes no sense to designate *only* those certain attributes (goodness, being, beauty, truth, etc.) as connecting creatures to God. Rather, Bonaventure considers every aspect of a creature as connecting it directly to God. This is to say, for Bonaventure, what connects a creature causally to God is not simply that the creature exists, but precisely what it exists as, namely, its form, which itself is good and has being. Accordingly, Bonaventure explicitly denies applying the image of the artisan to the artefact as analogous to God’s causal efficacy, at least in a proper sense – despite the fact that this analogy is so often used to describe the relationship between God and creatures via transcendentals.<sup>474</sup> Loosely, the analogy makes sense because God is like a craftsman insofar as he makes things, but the analogy ends here. In a stricter sense, this is a bad analogy because the artisan has only one idea from which he makes a multiplicity of sensible things. An artisan has in his mind, e.g., the idea of a table, and he makes many tables according to this idea. But these things are all the same: they are all tables. Even if the artisan wanted to make a different kind of table, e.g., a dining table instead of a coffee table, he would then have to work with a different idea. In applying this analogy to God, it would be as if God has one idea of himself, goodness, and thus makes things which are good; or he has one idea of himself, being, and thus makes things which are. But God makes many things of different *kinds*. Bonaventure writes:

To those who object, that the created artisan produces many things through one idea, I say that he does this by applying it to many different materials. Hence, if he has only one idea, it is impossible

---

<sup>473</sup> Jan Aertsen in a way does the same by not limiting a discussion of transcendentals in Bonaventure to attributes such as being and goodness, but rather focuses on things being *vestiges* of God. See: Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor to Francisco Suárez*. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 147–161.

<sup>474</sup> Nevertheless, this analogy is often used to explain Bonaventure’s understanding of God’s knowledge and the exemplars. Reynolds, e.g., cites the following line to explain Bonaventure’s notion of resemblance: “because a cause is reflected in its effect, and the wisdom of a craftsman is made manifest in his work, therefore God, who is the craftsman and cause of created things, is known through them.” See: P.L. Reynolds, “Bonaventure’s Theory of Resemblance,” *Traditio* 58 (2003): 219–255.

to comprehend, that according to this one idea by a simple glance (*simplici aspectu*) he could know the diverse ... thus it isn't analogous [i.e. to God's act of creation].<sup>475</sup>

On the one hand, if we apply this "idea-analogy" to God, as if he were the artisan who makes different *kinds* of tables, he would have to have a different idea for each kind of thing (i.e. each form). Thereby, God would have as many ideas in him as there are kinds of things, which is obviously absurd in that this implies multiplicity in God. On the other hand, if we want to avoid implying multiplicity in God, we have to restrict our analogy to God, like the artisan who only makes one kind of table, having only one idea, as Aquinas does, and thereby God can only make one kind of thing according to the one idea. Just as an artisan only knows one thing (e.g., a table), likewise God would only know one thing: being (and the transcendentals); but he would not know different kinds of being or different particular beings, except that they happen to *be* (and be good and true, etc.). In chapter 4, we saw the worrying implications of applying such an understanding of causality to God in Aquinas: if God only has one idea, he makes only one thing, being and all its convertible terms. As a result, we ended up without an ontological grounding in God of the essences of things, i.e. not *what* things are, but only *that* they exist. This seems to be precisely Bonaventure's worry here with the artisan analogy.<sup>476</sup>

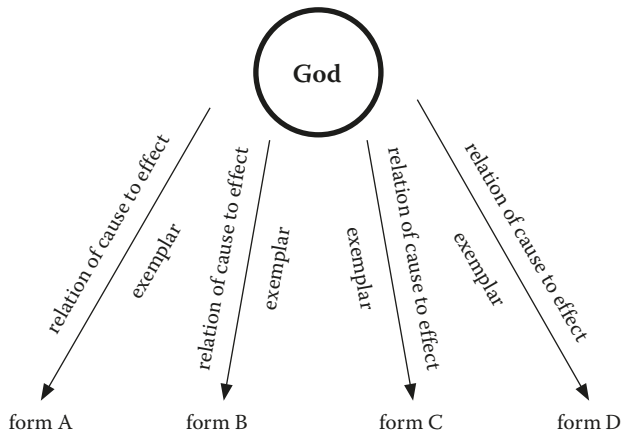
Thus, we can see quite clearly why Bonaventure considered the artisan analogy to be a bad one. God would have to have many ideas in order to make many different things, just as the artisan has to have many different ideas of, e.g., different kinds of tables, in order to make anything other than just one kind of table. Accordingly, Bonaventure turns to a different analogy for God: not the artist, but the art itself.

---

<sup>475</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 35, a. unicus, q. 4, p. 610b. "Ad illud ergo quod obiicitur, quod artifex creatus producit multa per unam ideam; dicendum, quod hoc facit per applicationem ipsius ad diversas materias. Unde si habet solum ideam unam, impossibile est intelligere, quod secundum illam simplici aspectu cognoscat diversa; Deus autem simplici aspectu cognoscit singularia ut diversa, ita quod secundum totum et secundum proprias differentias et proprietates; ideo non est simile."

<sup>476</sup> Interestingly, Bonaventure does not throw out the artisan analogy altogether but reframes it in another question of his *Commentary*. He considers God to cause rather the "eternal forms," i.e. the exemplars themselves – remembering that the exemplars are not forms – in the way that an artisan causes an artefact. He explains that production occurs in two ways: according to nature, production occurs "through forms, which are truly natures, just as man produces man, and a donkey produces a donkey." An intellect, however, produces in a different manner: production via intellect occurs rather through "forms which are not the this-ness of the thing (*aliquid rei*), but through ideas in the mind, just as an artisan produces an artefact." Bonaventure applies this second way of production to God: "[A]nd in this way are the eternal forms of things produced, since they are God" – i.e. God produces the eternal forms, or exemplars, through himself and within himself (of course, without a material component). Thus, the relationship of the artisan to the artefact applies not to the relationship of God to creatures, but to God's relationship to his ideas (i.e. the exemplar forms), which he generates within his own mind. This, however, raises the question of multiplicity in God – which will be addressed momentarily. "Agens secundum naturam producit per formas, quae sunt vere naturae, sicut homo hominem, et asinum asinum; agens per intellectum producit per formas quae non sunt aliquid rei, sed ideae in mente, sicut artifex producit arcam; et sic productae sunt res, et hoc modo sunt formae rerum aeternae, quia sunt Deus." *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 17b.

The art of making tables is one, despite the fact that the one art (God, the exemplar) is related to a multiplicity of different ideas (the forms) which each result in different tables of different kinds (particular composites). The analogy to God's causal efficacy which we should draw here is not to the one idea in the artisan's mind, for the obvious reasons above, but to the one art by which (and the reason for which) the artisan can produce both his multiplicity of ideas and the multiplicity of his artifacts. In God, who is just the art, we see a multiplicity of ideas, but this is only because there is a multiplicity of relations between the one art and the multiplicity of the effects of the art (i.e. the forms), as in the following diagram:



We can see that this causal schematic is very similar to what Dionysius does. However, instead of attempting to locate the forms in God as his ideas, Bonaventure has made the forms rather the effects of God – the forms themselves located ontologically in the natural order – with the divine ideas indicating the causal relation between God and each form. Moreover, it is precisely because the forms are located in the natural order that they are not hypostasized, i.e. the forms mediate no more than a material cause (e.g., flesh) would mediate between a creature and God.

We see a similar account of causation developed in the *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*. This text is generally the one preferred by scholars in discussing Bonaventure's notion of exemplar causation – unlike the *Commentary*, it is edited in an actual book, not a folio, and is translated into English, making it widely accessible. In this text, Bonaventure brings in a notion which we saw often utilized by Dionysius, though notably missing from Bonaventure's understanding of God's causal efficacy in the *Commentary*: the second person of the Trinity, the Word. While the issues of a relationship between faith and reason, philosophy and theology, are a topic for a different book, my focus here, quite clearly, is on reconstructing a system in which Bonaventure works independently from theological doctrine. This is to say, I consider it a strong advantage to Bonaventure's understanding of

God that it can be well explained with or without a triune God. This could not be said of Dionysius' solution, and to a certain extent the fact that Dionysius appealed to a doctrine of faith made Dionysius' solution somewhat unsatisfying on a purely philosophical level. However, while Bonaventure's understanding of how God creates does not rely on a doctrine of the Trinity, it nevertheless is compatible with such a doctrine. Here, one could say it is simply approaching the same question but armed with the tools of theology and Church doctrine instead of with reason alone.

However, I find it problematic that often the *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*, insofar as it is primarily a theological work, is considered sufficient, in a *philosophical* context, to discuss Bonaventure's doctrine of exemplars – which it is fair to say from the preceding discussion is treated at great length and with great detail in the *Commentary*. Indeed, the discussion in the *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ* can appear to be, at first glance, little more than a restatement of the position of Dionysius. However, because the *Commentary* account is so thorough, it has the potential to shed light now on the philosophical import of the *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*. This is to say, we, as readers, now armed with Bonaventure's account of causes and reasons, are in a better place to see a coherent and original philosophical account in this text as well.

As in the *Commentary*, in the *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*, Bonaventure asserts that God knows his creation by its similitude or likeness, i.e. through himself as the exemplar cause of his creation. Bonaventure clarifies that he is using the word “likeness” in a twofold sense.<sup>477</sup> The first is the more general “likeness of imitation” – which is any likeness by which a creature is similar to its Creator (i.e. God). The second is an “exemplary likeness,” the likeness by which the creature is like God by virtue of a specific form – and these forms, as we know, are caused by God, or better, are an expression of God in a way which both is and is intelligible.

In this text, Bonaventure also addresses the above worry that the ideas imply a multiplicity in God – and he does so using two analogies, the import of which one might miss without having first examined the *Commentary*. Bonaventure first of all makes explicit the way in which the ideas are multiple is only conceptual, not real or *secundum rem*: “Therefore, it must be said that the exemplary causes in God are many, not really but only conceptually, and by virtue of something found not only in the subject knowing but also in the object known.”<sup>478</sup> To illustrate this Bonaventure provides two analogies, which we will take in reverse order, insofar as the second analogy is very clearly an illustration of my above diagram. Bonaventure compares God's causality – although he notes he himself is not altogether happy with the image – to the way in which one light source illumines a number of objects

<sup>477</sup> *Sc. Chr.*, II concl. (pp. 105-107).

<sup>478</sup> *Sc. Chr.*, III concl. (p. 106).

by means of a number of rays of lights. He writes that “there are as many rays as there are objects illuminated, even though there is but one light and one source.”<sup>479</sup> In Bonaventure’s analogy,<sup>480</sup> the rays are the exemplars, which are multiple – yet the rays are intrinsic to and “contained within” the single light, just as the exemplars are contained in God as one exemplar cause: “[I]t is the divine truth itself that is the light; and its expressions in creatures are, as it were, the luminous rays which, though intrinsic to God, yet lead to and are directed to that which they express in a determinate manner.”<sup>481</sup> The forms thus are many not in God, but in nature, and the exemplar causes are many not in themselves, but only “in terms of that to which they refer or to which they are related.”<sup>482</sup> Here again we see the relational aspect of the exemplar forms, as I stressed in my above diagram. The light source (i.e. God) is multiplied by the fact that there are many objects, each of which receives its own ray of light (i.e. the exemplar), which expresses the relationship between cause and effect. Although Bonaventure does not specify why he is unhappy with this analogy, it seems to be that there are *really* many rays of light – i.e. a real multiplicity of rays. Analogously, there would be a *real* multiplicity of ideas, not only a conceptual multiplicity.

This analogy to the rays of light is better clarified when we look at the first analogy which Bonaventure gives, and which he seems to be happier with: between God’s causal efficacy and the efficacy of the forms. Indeed, this point is crucial but would certainly be missed if we did not have in hand Bonaventure’s understanding of causation from the *Commentary*. Bonaventure writes:

Indeed [God] is pure act. And in relation to it everything else is material and potential being. Therefore, since something which is one in form can be assimilated by beings that are materially many – as is clear in the case of whiteness in a man and in a stone – and since [divine] truth is related identically to all things, creatures being like matter with respect to it, it follows that as pure act the divine truth can be the expressive likeness of creatures.<sup>483</sup>

In the previous chapter, we examined Bonaventure’s understanding of how the form can be present in each member of a multiplicity of participants while remaining itself numerically one, i.e. insofar as in itself, the form is one and universal, while designated qua operator in each participant it is made multiple. Moreover, I highlighted that the distinction which Bonaventure makes between the form itself and the form qua operator in the composite, being neither real nor conceptual,

---

<sup>479</sup> *Sc. Chr.*, III concl. (p. 107).

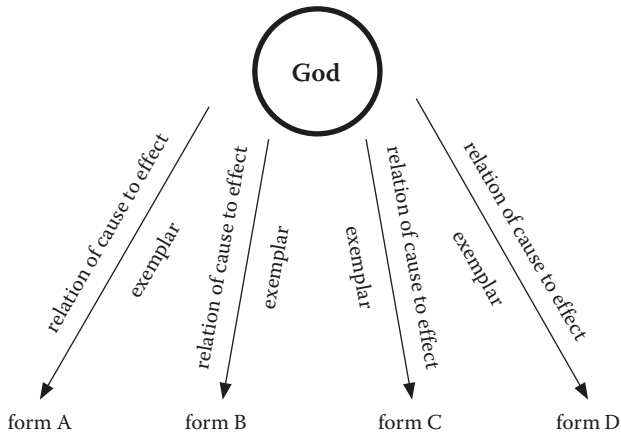
<sup>480</sup> This is of course different from the point and line analogy which we saw in Dionysius, for here there are not two terms (i.e. the point and the line, which are analogous to God and his effects), but three terms: the source of light, the light, and the illuminated which are analogous to God, his relation to his effects (i.e. the divine ideas), and the effects themselves.

<sup>481</sup> *Sc. Chr.*, III concl. (p. 107).

<sup>482</sup> *Sc. Chr.*, III concl. (p. 107).

<sup>483</sup> *Sc. Chr.*, III concl. (p. 106).

is something similar to a formal distinction. Here, we see Bonaventure applying this same relationship between God, his causal efficacy in creation (i.e. his being designated as one specific exemplar), and the effect. Just as forms are both one and multiple by way of a “quasi-formal” distinction, so is God – properly spoken of – one in himself, but simultaneously able to be causally present in many things – i.e. when he is designated as a particular divine exemplar. This is to say, the distinction between God and God being the cause of, e.g., cat – which designates him as the divine exemplar of cat – is neither real nor conceptual; just as “white” and “white being in man” is neither a real nor a conceptual distinction. However, the distinction between God being the divine exemplar of cat and being the divine exemplar of horse is a conceptual distinction – we are still talking about one God. Thus, the distinction between the exemplars is conceptual, while the distinction between God and God’s being an exemplar cause is neither conceptual nor real, i.e. something like a formal distinction. Looking again at our diagram, we can say that working horizontally between exemplars, the distinction is conceptual, while working vertically between God and God being x exemplar is neither conceptual nor real (i.e. [quasi-]formal):



Here again we can also note that to a certain extent Bonaventure anticipates Scotus and Ockham’s distinction between God and his own causal efficacy in each of his creatures, i.e. each of the divine exemplars – insofar as it is analogous to the causal efficacy of the forms – is likewise something like a formal distinction. Accordingly, while one in himself, God is able to be causally present in all of his creation: God *qua* related to this form is a divine exemplar, just as form *qua* related to this composite is a seminal reason.

Turning back to the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Bonaventure gives us a good summary of the way in which things exist: they exist “either in themselves or in

their cause, i.e. in their proper genus, and in their exemplar.”<sup>484</sup> Or again, of course, Bonaventure’s well-known threefold existence: “[T]hreefold is the existence of things, that is in the exemplar eternally, and in the created intellect, and in this world.”<sup>485</sup> “In this world” refers to the forms; “in the created intellect” to the abstracted form which corresponds to and is caused by the extra-mental form in the world; and, finally, “in the exemplar” which is the cause of the form – and is God himself.

There is, perhaps, one last lingering question about *why* a multiplicity of effects actually proceeds from this one God, i.e. why does God create? There are two fairly common (and obvious) ways of responding to this question: either God *must* create (à la Plotinus), or God *wants* to create. Naturally, as a Christian, Bonaventure will take the latter position, and while the topic of God’s will is one deserving of a more lengthy study in Bonaventure, here we should at least examine briefly how Bonaventure would use an understanding of God’s will to answer the above question.

Bonaventure argues that God’s act, above discussed in terms of his act of knowing or causing, is also to be identified with his act of willing. We see Bonaventure bring back his Aristotelianism to address this identification between God’s act of knowing and willing, particularly insofar as this is not a point which is very explicitly explained by Dionysius. Bonaventure begins by stating: “For, the Philosopher in Book XII concludes that ‘the will (*voluntas*) is the act (ἐνέργεια) of this God.’”<sup>486</sup> This is indeed quite an abbreviated argument, but an important one – as we have often seen Bonaventure shorthand arguments by providing a snippet of something in Aristotle’s texts, he does so here as well. First of all, it should be noted that this is not quite a correct quotation – in fact, it is not quite a quotation at all, but rather seems to be the running together of two separate passages from *Metaphysics* XII.7.<sup>487</sup>

The first passage from which he takes the above quotation concerns the equation of the objects of desire and intellect, and the second concerns the attribution of the act of thought to God. First of all, the Quaracchi editors assert that in the Latin translation which Bonaventure is using, he should be saying *voluptas* instead of *voluntas* (i.e. desire instead of will) – but here, they are missing his meaning.<sup>488</sup> In the first line which Bonaventure is referencing, Aristotle begins by stating: “The object of desire (ὀρεκτὸν) and the object of thought move without being moved. The

<sup>484</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 39, a. 1, q. 1, p. 686b. “Ad illud quod obiicitur tertio, quod ab aeterno fuit unum solum ens; dicendum, quod duplex est rei esse, scilicet in se, et in sua causa, id est in proprio genere et in exemplari.”

<sup>485</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 36, a. 2, q. 11, p. 625b. “Dicendum, quod triplex est existentia rerum, scilicet in exemplari aeterno, et in intellectu creato, et in ipso mundo.”

<sup>486</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 45, a. 1, q. 1, p. 798b. “Item, Philosophus in duodecimo concludit quod ‘voluntas est actio ipsius Dei.’”

<sup>487</sup> It doesn’t necessarily seem that Bonaventure thinks this is a quotation either, because Bonaventure does not say that the Philosopher “says” this but that he “concludes” this.

<sup>488</sup> They are also citing *Meta.* XI.7, where there is no discussion of desire or will – and they do not mention which Latin translation they are using either, which makes this assertion all the more misleading. *Meta.* XI.7 contains a discussion of what first philosophy is.

primary objects of desire (ὄρεκτὸν) and thought are the same.”<sup>489</sup> If Aristotle stopped here, then the Quaracchi editors would be right – Bonaventure would be mistaking ὄρεκτὸν for meaning *voluntas* instead of the better Latin translation *voluptas*, which isn’t a terrible mistake on Bonaventure’s part but isn’t quite accurate either. However, Bonaventure is not referencing ὄρεκτὸν precisely, but a specific kind of ὄρεκτὸν. Aristotle continues in this passage to make a distinction between desires which are directed towards apparent goods and desires directed towards the real good: “For it is the apparent good which is the desire of appetite (ἐπιθυμητός), and the primary good which is the desire of the will (βουλητός).”<sup>490</sup> This latter βουλητός, i.e. that which is desired by a rational will, is what Bonaventure is referencing here with the Latin *voluntas* – i.e. the βουλητός would be desired by a *voluntas*. Bonaventure is taking Aristotle to say the object of the will, here meaning the desire of a rational soul, and the object of the intellect are identical. Indeed, this is not an odd thing to think insofar as the object of desire of a rational soul would be something which is also the object of thought – while the object of the appetite would not be an object of thought insofar as the appetite does not think.

The more common way of taking this passage in Aristotle is to then apply it to the desire of rational souls directed towards the primary good, which is God, i.e. that all rational beings desire, or will, the good. However, Bonaventure takes this passage to mean something slightly different. In the lines following the above cited passage (this being the second passage which Bonaventure is incorporating), Aristotle then asserts that the act of God is thought: “For the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality, etc.”<sup>491</sup> Here, Bonaventure carries over the previous equation of the act of thought and the act of will into this discussion of God’s act: insofar as God engages in thought, he likewise engages in willing. These two acts are in fact one and the same, as their object is one and the same: God himself. This is key for Bonaventure’s solution to the above problem: when God knows, as we have seen that he does via the divine exemplars, his act of knowing is the same as his act of willing.

This is indeed quite a different notion of God’s will than would be found in, e.g., Scotus or Ockham – it would be far too Greek for them in its identification of will and thought. Bonaventure here is not trying to preserve the primacy of God’s will over his other acts, but rather to equate all of them. In knowing himself, which is to desire himself, God thereby expresses himself externally. The knowledge and the expression are clearly not necessitated insofar as these acts are identical with the act of will. Bonaventure then makes three more arguments equating the act of

<sup>489</sup> *Meta.* XII.7 1072a26-27. “κινεῖ δὲ ὧδε τὸ ὄρεκτὸν καὶ τὸ νοητὸν: κινεῖ οὐ κινούμενα.”

<sup>490</sup> *Meta.* XII.7 1072a28-29. “ἐπιθυμητὸν μὲν γὰρ τὸ φαινόμενον καλόν, βουλητὸν δὲ πρῶτον τὸ ὄν καλόν.”

<sup>491</sup> *Meta.* XII.7 1072b28-30. “ἔχει δὲ ὧδε. καὶ ζωὴ δὲ γε ὑπάρχει: ἡ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωὴ, ἐκεῖνος δὲ ἡ ἐνέργεια: ἐνέργεια δὲ ἡ καθ’ αὐτὴν ἐκείνου ζωὴ ἀρίστη καὶ αἰτίος.”



willing with other attributes of God: if he is the most happy, he must have a will; if he is the most just, he must have a will; and if he is the most free (as he makes clear, in the sense of acting out of love, as opposed to acting out of obligation), he also must have a will. The important point for us in this discussion is that Bonaventure is clear on the point that God creates and knows his creation because he desires to do so – and in fact this act of willing is God’s act, just as the act of knowing is God’s act. Thus, in knowing his creation, he wills things to be – or the reverse, in willing things to be, he knows them.<sup>492</sup>

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, as promised, we have seen more of the Neoplatonic character of Bonaventure’s thought highlighted – but, of course, supplemented with Aristotle. Here, we can even say that the fact that Bonaventure has relinquished that one very Neoplatonic aspect of forms, that they are separate, has allowed him to retain his Neoplatonism when it comes to God’s causal efficacy, i.e. a doctrine of exemplarism. This is to say, it is much easier to explain the divine exemplars when one does not also have to account for the forms themselves being in God – as, e.g., Dionysius has to do – but only to account for a causal relationship between God, as the divine exemplar, and the forms in nature. Bonaventure’s account – particularly as it is provided in the *Commentary* – has the added benefit of not appealing to a Christian notion of the second person of the Trinity as the locus for the divine ideas. Indeed, Bonaventure, to a further extent than Dionysius, has eliminated the necessity of thinking about God as if he were a mind with many thoughts. Rather, God is conceived of as a principle, the cause of – or more properly said, the reason for – his creation.

To compare what we have seen in this chapter to what we have seen in the previous chapter: we can reiterate our above point, brought out by Bonaventure in the *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*, that God bears a similar relationship to the forms as the forms bear to sensibles. Remembering that the causal efficacy of the forms with relation to sensibles is not of an external cause, while God’s relationship to the forms certainly is, nevertheless we can see that in

---

<sup>492</sup> Bonaventure makes this point clear in a series of further arguments for the identification of other attributes of God with the attribute of possessing a will. The first, and perhaps most convincing, is that if God is most powerful, then he must also have the will as his act: “For according to reason, it seems that things which reside under the command of created things is the highest power, therefore if having will from one’s self indicates power ... then God is the most powerful, and everything which is a power, is to be attributed to him: therefore, etc.” *In Sent.* I, d. 45, a. 1, q. 1, p. 798b. “Item ratione videtur, quia voluntas est illud penes quod residet inter creata summa potestas, ergo si voluntas de se dicit potestatem, quia omnibus praesidet in regno animae, et nihil potest sibi imperare; sed Deus est potentissimus, et omne quod potentiae est, sibi attribuendum est: ergo, etc.” We only attribute to a creature a power if this power is free for the creature to use, i.e. the strength of an animal is no power at all if the animal does not have the will to put its strength into use.

both causal relationships the cause considered qua related to its effect is key. God considered qua related to form  $x$  constitutes the divine idea of form  $x$  – similarly the form of, e.g., horse, considered qua related to a particular horse constituted the seminal reason. Here, again, we see how Bonaventure is sure to make a distinction between these different ways of considering a cause (i.e. in itself vs. related to its effects), while nonetheless maintaining that this does not double the cause, creating two distinct terms à la Proclus' monad vs. irradiated potency. Moreover, on this point we can see that, even when approaching God, Bonaventure has still not relinquished the understanding of causation which he developed working with the texts of Aristotle. This is to say that while Aristotle is indeed not the place Bonaventure looks for an account of exemplars per se, he nevertheless is looking at the account of exemplars in his Neoplatonic sources very much through the lens of his own understanding of Aristotle – thereby he sees himself arriving at a wider picture of the cosmos and God which is not beyond the realms of Aristotelianism, albeit one supplemented with Neoplatonism when it comes to the way in which God would create such a cosmos.



## CHAPTER 6

# FORMS IN THE NATURAL WORLD

*If, however, by observing repeated instances we had succeeded in grasping the universal, we should have our proof....The value of the universal is that it exhibits its cause.*

Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* I.31 88a3-7.

In this chapter, we turn to the details of Bonaventure's understanding of sensible creatures: how they are composed of forms and how each composite is individuated. In other words, my purpose in this chapter is to tie up those loose ends we have left with regard to sensible creatures considered in and of themselves, most of which pertain to what Bonaventure would call not metaphysics precisely but, rather, physics.

The first topic which we will examine is Bonaventure's understanding of individuation, where Bonaventure argues against both positions: (1) that individuation arises from the matter and (2) that individuation arises from the form. His own option is that it is the actual coming together of both the form and the matter which results in an individual. In the previous chapter, I pointed out the similarity between Bonaventure's structure of a universal form in relation to a particularized/singular form and Scotus' structure of a common nature related to an individual form. One could have imagined that Bonaventure, like Scotus, would in turn use the particularized form as his principle of individuation. However, Bonaventure rather argues *against* a view that individuation arises, not only from a form, but precisely from an individual form. Indeed, while anticipating Scotus' individual form, Bonaventure also anticipates the worries which arise from designating it as a principle of individuation and, accordingly, dismisses this as an option.

In the following section, we will address the question of how creatures are composed of forms. In this discussion, we turn to the famous (or infamous) doctrine of a plurality of substantial forms in Bonaventure's thought. Here I defend the position that such a doctrine is indeed present in Bonaventure's texts – contrary to some contemporary scholars, e.g., Quinn, who maintains that there is in Bonaventure's hylomorphic theory only one substantial form, as Aquinas maintains. Indeed, the majority of scholars disagree with Quinn, as do I. However, I add nuance to Bonaventure's doctrine of a plurality of substantial forms by showing precisely which forms Bonaventure considers to be substantial and which ones he does not – a distinction which is often skimmed over in secondary literature. Particularly important in this section is the question of the form of light, insofar as Bonaventure's discussion of light as a (substantial) form most strongly implies that he considers there to be more than one substantial form. Here, I argue primarily against Quinn who maintains that Bonaventure considers light to be the substantial form only of

celestial bodies – and secondarily against other scholars who, although (correctly) maintaining that Bonaventure considers light to be a substantial form, nonetheless often confound it with the (many) other uses of “light” found throughout Bonaventure’s corpus. I first of all highlight the distinction between two different senses in which Bonaventure uses the term light: (1) to mean a substantial form (i.e. the form common to all bodies) and (2) to mean an accidental form which is possessed only by celestial bodies (i.e. light-giving or luminous). This distinction clarifies precisely what Bonaventure means by attributing light to all bodies and, moreover, helps us to avoid not only confounding these two senses of light, but also confusing the form of light with the illuminative light of Bonaventure’s epistemology – as scholars often merge this light together the light of Bonaventure’s physics.<sup>493</sup> Contrary to the more common view that Bonaventure’s “metaphysics of light” brings a kind of poetical mysticism to his hylomorphism, I argue that the form of light in Bonaventure’s metaphysics is nothing more than the form which makes a body be a body, i.e. the general form of corporeity.

Our penultimate topic will be causation among sensible things. Here, we will examine forms not as the definitions of things but as rules operative in nature. In this discussion, we will address the compatibility of Bonaventure’s account with modern evolutionary theory. We will then apply Bonaventure’s understanding of how universal rules exist in nature to, what one might call, his philosophy of science.

For our final point of discussion, we will turn to the question of the sense in which evil is caused by/participatory in God. On this point, Bonaventure synthesizes Dionysius and Aristotle, to the effect of maintaining Dionysius’ position but developing and clarifying it with the help of Aristotle. From Dionysius, he takes the position that it is precisely the *composition* of evil in a creature which is caused by God; from Aristotle, he takes over a more precise understanding of the ontological status of evil as being a quality “said of” composite substances, while not a substance unto itself.

## 1. INDIVIDUATION

Before addressing how and why Bonaventure considers individuation to occur, we should first address what the nature of matter is. For Bonaventure, put simply, matter is potency. Nevertheless, as potency, it is not excluded from being an effect of God, “for matter is not pure privation, rather it has, by the reason of its essence, something from beauty and something from light.”<sup>494</sup> Matter, although pure potentiality with respect to any form, is not pure privation – it has in itself something of the

<sup>493</sup> Indeed, scholars also often confound these two types of light with what Bonaventure calls *lumen*, a further concept which we will discuss in the second section as well. Simply put, *lumen* is the radius of light not the light itself.

<sup>494</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p.17b. “Nam materia non est privatio pura, immo ratione suae essentiae habet aliquid de pulchritudine et aliquid de luce.”

form of *Lux*, which, as we will show momentarily, is the form common to all bodies.<sup>495</sup> Bonaventure's reasoning here is that matter, although not itself a body, insofar as it is necessary for all bodies, it is said to participate, albeit minimally, in the form which is common to all bodies. Bonaventure quotes Augustine, making a similar point: "Augustine says that [matter] has mode, species, and order, although imperfectly."<sup>496</sup>

Of all of God's effects, then, matter is the lowest – but still it is one of God's effects.<sup>497</sup> Moreover, insofar as matter is caused by God, it is good. Recalling somewhat Proclus' claim that matter is a kind of lowest form,<sup>498</sup> Bonaventure writes: "But this does not necessitate that God creates everything in equal similitude to himself, but according to grades."<sup>499</sup>

He then addresses the question of what is the principle of individuation. Bonaventure first entertains two options: (1) that matter is the sole cause of individuation and (2) that forms are the sole cause of individuation. The position that matter is the sole cause of individuation is a fairly straightforward one, based on the claim that "the individual does not add anything to the species except the matter."<sup>500</sup> This is a reference to the *Categories*,<sup>501</sup> and it is word for word a position which Bonaventure repeats a number of times, notably in the question on seminal reasons, where he develops the distinction between the seminal reasons and the universal forms. He agrees in that question with the position, namely, that the only thing which distinguishes the individual composite from the form itself is that the composite has matter. However, what Bonaventure disagrees with is taking this position as a premise from which one concludes that matter is *sole* cause of individuation. (Naturally, this reasoning should remind us of Aquinas.) Bonaventure indicates otherwise: just because the difference between the composite and the form is that one is dependent on matter and one is not, this does not necessarily mean that matter is sole principle of individuation.

The second option is that a form is the cause of individuation. While Bonaventure is taking this position from Averroes' *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, it also interestingly anticipates the position of Duns Scotus. Bonaventure gives a prelimi-

---

<sup>495</sup> Here, I am speaking primarily about physical matter, not spiritual matter. Spiritual matter, precisely insofar as it is incorporeal, does not participate in light – but one would assume then it still has "something from beauty."

<sup>496</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 17b. "Unde Augustinus dicit, quod habet modum, speciem et ordinem, quamvis imperfecte."

<sup>497</sup> Naturally, as we saw in the previous chapter, matter has to be one of God's effects or else it would be a preexisting principle.

<sup>498</sup> Yet, of course, Bonaventure does not assert that matter itself is a form.

<sup>499</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 17b. "Non oportet autem, quod Deus omnes res producat sibi aequaliter similes, immo secundum gradum."

<sup>500</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 2, q. 3, p. 109a-b. "Quidam enim innitentes vero Philosophi dixerunt, quod individuatio venit a materia, quia individuum supra speciem non addit nisi materiam. Et hoc ponebant, quia dixerunt, universalialia solum dicere formas; et tunc primo tangitur materia, quando perventur ad hoc aliquid."

<sup>501</sup> *Cat.* V,5 3b10-30.

nary summary of this position: “[I]ndividuation is from the form, and they say that beyond the form of most specific species, there is the individual form.”<sup>502</sup> Bonaventure gives the reasoning for this position:

And what moves them to posit this is that they understand order in forms according to generation and according to nature to occur in the same way, through which it is ordered in genera, that the form of the most general genus comes forth first in matter; and so descending all the way to the species. And so far this form does not constitute the individual, since it is not in any way in act, but beyond this form, follows the individual [one] which is entirely in act, just as matter is entirely in potency.<sup>503</sup>

This position maintains that one form (i.e. the individual form) makes the composite exist actually as one individual – this form alone (i.e. not the species and/or genus) being in act and matter being in potency.<sup>504</sup>

Bonaventure then turns to what he considers to be the failings of these two positions. Addressing the first position, he targets as his point of critique that matter is the same in all material things, and thus it seems impossible that matter would make sensible things really different from one another. He writes: “For how matter, which is common to all, may be the first principle (*principale principium*) and cause of distinction, is rather difficult to see.”<sup>505</sup> Indeed, matter is capable of making things different from one another with regard to their materiality. However, if matter is the only cause of individuation, this still means that sensible things of the same kind would be identical with regard to their intelligible content – e.g., if I have two horses, individuated solely by their matter, they should be identical with regard to their intelligible content, but they are not: Rye’s horse-ness is different from Alejandro’s horse-ness. Matter does not seem to be the only thing which distinguishes the one from the other.

Addressing the second position, Bonaventure writes: “Conversely, how the form may be the total and peculiar cause of numerical distinction is rather difficult to understand, given that all created form, insofar as it is from its own nature is born to have similitude to another, just as the Philosopher himself says, as is the case regarding the sun and in the moon.”<sup>506</sup> This is to say, forms are always universals – an individual form is not really a form (a familiar theme in Bonaventure).

<sup>502</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3. p. 1, a. 2, q. 3, p. 109b. “Aliis vero aliter visum est, scilicet quod individuatione esset a forma, et dixerunt, quod ultra formam speciei specialissimae est forma individualis.”

<sup>503</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3. p. 1, a. 2, q. 3, p. 109b. “Et quod movit hoc ponere illud fuit, quod intellexerunt, ordinem in formis secundum generationem et naturam esse per eundem modum, per quem ordinatur in genere, ita quod forma generis generalissimi primo advenit materiae; et sic descendendo usque ad speciem. Et adhuc forma illa non constituit individuum, quia non est omnino in actu, sed ultra hanc formam individualis subsequitur, quae est omnino in actu, sicut materia fuit omnino in potentia.”

<sup>504</sup> It is indeed interesting here to point out that the term *forma individualis* is Scotus’ alternative term for haecceity.

<sup>505</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3. p. 1, a. 2, q. 3, p. 109b. “Quomodo enim materia, quae omnibus est communis, erit principale principium et causa distinctionis, valde difficile est videre.”

<sup>506</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3. p. 1, a. 2, q. 3, p. 109b. “Rursus, quomodo forma sit tota et praecipua causa numeralis distinctionis, valde difficile est capere, cum omnis forma creata, quantum est de sui natura, nata sit habere aliam similem, sicut et ipse Philosophus dicit etiam in sole et luna esse.”

The real thrust of this argument comes from the above slightly obscure and easily skimmed over reference to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.<sup>507</sup> In the passage Bonaventure is referencing, Aristotle is in the midst of highlighting the many absurd implications of the Platonic Ideas. Here Aristotle targets the position that each form is an individual in the way that a particular instance of a universal is (e.g., this man, Cleon). If Ideas, for Aristotle, are individual, they are impossible to define. Aristotle begins by saying that substance is of two kinds – “the concrete thing and the formula (*logos*)” – and then clarifies, “I mean that one kind of substance is the formula in combination with the matter, and the other is the formula in its full sense.”<sup>508</sup> Substance in the former sense (i.e. the concrete thing) “admits of destruction, for they also admit of generation.”<sup>509</sup> However, substance in the latter sense (i.e. the formula in its full sense) “does not admit of any destruction in the sense of it ever being destroyed, since neither does it so admit of generation (for the essence of house is not generated, but only the essence of this house).”<sup>510</sup> Of particular sensible substances, Aristotle concludes, “there is no definition or demonstration ... because they contain matter whose nature is such that it can both exist and not exist. Hence all the individual instances of them are perishable.”<sup>511</sup> Accordingly, sensible individuals are always changing, but “demonstration and definition cannot vary.”<sup>512</sup> Thus, in holding with those many citations we saw Bonaventure give of Aristotle two chapters ago, the individual is not intelligible – only that which is common to the many is intelligible.

The impossibility of defining individuals is brought out by the example of defining “eternal entities, especially in the case of such as are unique, e.g. the sun and the moon.”<sup>513</sup> People think that they are defining the sun by including things in a definition such as “that which goes around the earth,” or “night-hidden,” but if these were removed, the sun would still be the sun.<sup>514</sup> More importantly, they attempt to define the sun incorrectly by saying things of it which either do apply or may apply to something else, e.g., “if another thing with those attributes comes into being, clearly it will be a sun.”<sup>515</sup> This highlights the impossibility of defining individuals: if I try to define the sun as “eternal light giving body,” even though there is only one individual to which I can apply the definition, the definition is nevertheless applicable to other things, i.e. it is a universal – it just happens to be the case that there are no other things to which we can apply it. This is very similar to the argument presented

---

<sup>507</sup> The Quaracchi edition gives the reference as *Meta.* VI.15, which must be a typo (insofar as this does not exist). The correct citation is VII.15. They are however right to cross-reference *De Cael.* I.9, a chapter which Bonaventure cites very frequently.

<sup>508</sup> *Meta.* VII.15 1039b20-23.

<sup>509</sup> *Meta.* VII.15 1039b24-26.

<sup>510</sup> *Meta.* VII.15 1039b28-29.

<sup>511</sup> *Meta.* VII.15 1039b30-31.

<sup>512</sup> *Meta.* VII.15 1039b39-1040a1.

<sup>513</sup> *Meta.* VII.15 1040a28-30.

<sup>514</sup> *Meta.* VII.15 1040a30-32.

<sup>515</sup> *Meta.* VII.15 1040a39-40.



in *De Caelo* I.9, where Aristotle makes a distinction between “this universe” and “universe” – the former is matter and form, and the latter is form alone, and thus it is possible that “universe” be applicable to another universe, even though Aristotle argues that there is in fact only one.<sup>516</sup>

The point of this discussion is to say that if something is an individual, it cannot be defined – the formula (i.e. the definition) is universal. And so, even if I apply the correct definition to the sun or the moon and these happen to be the only sun and moon which exist, my definition is still universal not individual. This is precisely Bonaventure’s issue with saying that there is an individual form that possesses the same rank as the non-individual forms – indeed, an issue which he brings out in this shorthand way by referencing “the sun and the moon.” Certainly, as we have seen, Bonaventure maintains a form which is particularized in the individual, i.e. the seminal reason or natural form, but this form is emphatically *not* knowable or able to be defined insofar as under this consideration, it is itself individual. This is to say, “the form is not an individual except according to its conjunction in matter”<sup>517</sup> – in which case it is no longer a universal and thus not really a form in the proper sense, but a seminal reason. Moreover, the seminal reason is not complete and in act as the universal forms are. Thus, the position that this individual form would itself be a form, properly said, in act, and responsible for the individuation of a substance seems to Bonaventure simply to be a contradiction in terms: an individual form is not really a form at all.

It is interesting here to point out that the position which Bonaventure is arguing against is quite similar to that of Duns Scotus. Timothy Noone considers that Bonaventure rejects the position that a form can be the principle of individuation simply because Bonaventure does not have a distinction between an individual and universal form.<sup>518</sup> Quite clearly, this is not the case – first of all, because in entertain-

---

<sup>516</sup> Of course, Aristotle’s reason that there could not be another universe is not based on the fact that the form could not be applied to another universe (because it could be), but because there would be no matter left over, i.e. a universe has to encompass all the matter in order to be a universe, and therefore there could not be another.

<sup>517</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3. p. 1, a. 2, q. 3, p. 110b. “Quod obicitur ad oppositum, quod non possit essa a forma, sed a materia; dicendum, quod rationes illae probant, ut patet, quod non totaliter est a forma, quia forma nulla est individua, nisi propter coniunctionem sui cum materia. Et universalia similiter, quia dicunt formas, non concernunt materiam nisi ratione suorum individuorum, pro quibus supponunt, quando definiuntur vel subiiciuntur.”

<sup>518</sup> See Timothy Noone, “Universals and Individuation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003), 122. Boehner likewise misses the fact that the thrust of Bonaventure’s argument is directed against precisely an *individual* form. Boehner rather summarizes the argument as: “it is ... difficult to see, how a form which by its very nature is able to have other similar forms, should be the principle of difference.” This is not quite the same point, insofar as it misses the emphasis on the contradiction in terms posed by an “individual form.” It is not that the form cannot be a principle of individuation because it by its nature is similar to many things, but because if a form were to be a principle of individuation, it would have to be an individual form – and, for Bonaventure, this is absurd insofar as “individual form” is a contradiction in terms. Philotheus Boehner, *History of the Franciscan School: Saint Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1941), 70.

ing this opposing position, Bonaventure even uses the same term Scotus does for his individual form, *forma individualis*, which indicates that he is aware he is not dealing with a universal form. Secondly, and more importantly, Bonaventure, very much like Scotus, has in his own thought a notion of a particularized/singular form, i.e. the seminal reason/natural form<sup>519</sup> – granted, he does not call his particularized form a “haecceity” or an “individual form,” but it nonetheless functions in a similar manner to Scotus’ individual form/haecceity, as we saw in chapter 5.

However, while Bonaventure has his own particularized form as an option on the table, he quite clearly does not want to designate it as a principle of individuation. Why? As we saw above, Bonaventure, unlike Scotus, is emphatic that although this particularized form may loosely be called a form, properly speaking it is *not* a form. The particularized form, for Bonaventure, is rather something which *results* from individuation – indeed, it cannot be the cause of individuation because, like the individual, it is posterior, not only to its parts (i.e. form and matter), but to the very process of individuation. For Bonaventure, to say that the particularized form is the principle of individuation would not be much more helpful than saying that the individual is the principle of individuation. The fact that Bonaventure does not attribute the principle of individuation to his particularized form moreover helps him to avoid the most obvious critique of Scotus’ position: that if the individual form is still a form, then why is Socrates’ humanity not included in the universal definition of humanity? Or as Bonaventure puts the absurd result of claiming that an individual form has the same status as a universal form: in such a case, “two fires differ formally from one other,” i.e. insofar as the individual forms of the two respective fires would provide two different definitions.<sup>520</sup> A similar argument is found in Ockham’s critique of Scotus’ position, and among his arguments against Scotus, we find essentially the same argument made by Bonaventure, as above: that it is impossible, if not a plain contradiction, to claim that a nature is both universal and singular.<sup>521</sup> As Ockham writes, sounding very much in accordance with Bonaventure

---

<sup>519</sup> As we can recall from chapter 5, Bonaventure calls the particular form alternatively: seminal reason, singular form, and natural form. It is unclear why he prefers the term “singular” to “individual” form.

<sup>520</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3. p. 1, a. 2, q. 3, p. 109b. “Vel quomodo dicemus, duos ignes differre formaliter, vel etiam alia, quae plurificantur et numero distinguuntur ex sola divisione continui, ubi nullius est novae formae inductio?”

<sup>521</sup> This contradiction between claiming that the nature is both universal and singular is indeed the point of departure for most of Ockham’s arguments against Scotus. Naturally, Ockham goes into greater detail than Bonaventure in showing the absurdities of saying that a nature is both universal and singular, but the basic idea is shared by the two. King gives a good summary of these arguments in Ockham, as well as an attempt to resolve them: Peter King, “Duns Scotus on the Common Nature,” *Philosophical Topics* 20 (1992): 50–76. Ockham makes seven arguments against Scotus’ account of individuation, which are to be found in *Ordinatio* I, d. 3, q.6, pp. 101-126.

on this point: “No nature that is really individual is really universal; therefore if that nature is really the individual, it will not be really universal.”<sup>522</sup>

It is also interesting to add that the idea of the *forma individualis* as the principle of individuation was around in Bonaventure’s time, as it is found in the thought of Bonaventure’s contemporary, John Peckham. Peckham, like Scotus, identifies this *forma individualis* as that which *contracts* the universal into the individual – here anticipating also the notion of contraction taken up by Scotus.<sup>523</sup> One final point of interest: while Peckham makes a notion of contraction central to his understanding of individuation, Bonaventure himself uses the term – sparingly – but does use it. He mentions it, however, not in the discussion of individuation, but in a comparison between God’s simplicity and the simplicity of creatures, saying that it is due to the contraction of species and genus into sensible things that they are composites, i.e. composites of act and potency.<sup>524</sup> However, the fact that Bonaventure does not bring contraction into play in his discussion of individuation indicates that he does not consider it to account for individuation but rather to be the result of individuation, just as the singular form does not account for individuation but is rather the result of it.

Bonaventure then presents a third option which “is more satisfactory, that individuation arises from the actual conjunction of matter with form....”<sup>525</sup> He continues on to provide an analogy, which happens to be from Aristotle, although taken in a slightly unexpected direction:<sup>526</sup> “[J]ust as it is clear that while there may be the impression or expression of many sigils in wax, which at first was one, neither the sigil may be made many without the wax, nor may the wax be numbered unless there are different sigils in it.”<sup>527</sup> Indeed, it is because Bonaventure has developed a distinction between the universal form and the (particularized) seminal reason that he can make this third option work: the universal is the sigil, the wax is the matter, the marking of the sigil in the wax is the seminal reason, while the marked

<sup>522</sup> *Ordinatio* I, d. 3, q.6, p. 160.

<sup>523</sup> Again, an overlooked facet of Peckham’s thought – and interestingly one which marks him in distinction to Bonaventure. *Summa de Esse et Essentia* VI-VII, in *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of John Peckham* (Marquette, WI: Marquette Univ. Press, 2022), 105–108.

<sup>524</sup> *In Sent.* I, d. 8, p. II, art. unicus, q. 11. p. 168b. “Creaturae autem compositae sunt nec vere simplices, quia habent esse mixtum ex actu et potentia, et ita in genere et specie per additionem contractum, quia habent esse aliunde datum, quia habent esse post Deum unum, a quo deficient; et ita cadunt in compositionem.”

<sup>525</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 2, q. 3, p. 109b. “Ideo est tertia positio satis planior, quod individuatō consurgit ex actuali coniunctione materiae cum forma...”

<sup>526</sup> A reference is not provided here by the Quaracchi editors – it is a clear reference to Aristotle *De An.* II.1. The seal in wax analogy is also discussed in Neoplatonic texts, none of which Bonaventure would have had access to. For example, Proclus discusses its use by the Middle Platonists (among their other two preferred analogies: reflection in water, and the statue) and follows the position of Syrianus that all three are useful but ultimately inadequate analogies. *In Parm.* 847.3off.

<sup>527</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 2, q. 3, p. 109b. “Ideo est tertia positio satis planior, quod individuatō consurgit ex actuali coniunctione materiae cum forma sicut patet, cum impressio vel expressio fit multorum sigillorum in cera, quae prius erat una, nec sigilla plurificari possunt sine cera, nec cera numeratur nisi quia fiunt in ea diversa sigilla.”

wax itself is the composite. Bonaventure then specifies precisely what comes from each of these two principles (i.e. matter and form), which are responsible for individuation. Our individual is a *hoc aliquid*. It has its *hoc* from the matter, which posits the form in a specific place and time. From the form it has its *aliquid*, what it is. For example, Rye, analogous to the marked wax, has his own equinity, analogous to the mark of the sigil in the wax – the mark of the sigil being dependent on both the wax and the sigil itself. Indeed, then, Rye’s equinity, or this mark of the sigil in this wax, is one individual in contrast to Alejandro’s equinity, or that mark of the sigil in that wax – just as Rye, or this marked wax, and Alejandro, that marked wax, are distinct. Thus, they are distinct not only materially, but also have two distinct essences which are peculiar to themselves. Naturally this is also to say, as we saw in our previous chapter on forms, that the individual has from the matter *existere* and from the form *esse*. That which really exists in the composite is simply the form which is always and everywhere – but the fact that the form happens to be here and now, which is not really *esse*, but only exists (*existere*), is thanks to the matter.

## 2. LIGHT AND THE QUESTION OF A PLURALITY OF SUBSTANTIAL FORMS

The question still remains as to *which* forms are necessary in this coming together of the individual composite – or, put another way, which forms are substantial. Gilson introduces this topic of the composition of creatures with the remark that “we are encountering for the first time this doctrine of a plurality of forms which so strongly embarrasses [Bonaventure’s] interpreters...”<sup>528</sup> Aside from the question of the influence of Aristotle on Bonaventure, Bonaventure’s doctrine of the plurality of forms is one of the few aspects of his hylomorphic theory that has been a topic of debate among scholars. While it is almost unanimously accepted that Bonaventure did in fact maintain a “plurality of substantial forms,” as it has come to be known in secondary scholarship, John Francis Quinn was indeed so embarrassed by this doctrine that he denied its presence altogether in Bonaventure’s thought. While few scholars have accepted Quinn’s thesis that Bonaventure, in agreement with Aquinas, considered there to be only one substantial form, Quinn’s claim that there is not much evidence in Bonaventure’s thought for this position is not entirely without merit. Bonaventure himself never uses the term “plurality of substantial forms,” nor does he ever address or explicitly defend the position. On the other hand, much like Aristotle, he also never makes it entirely apparent that there is only one “substantial form” – as Aquinas so clearly does. Additionally, as I noted in chapter 4, Bonaventure rarely refers to forms as substances – he rather only says

---

<sup>528</sup> Etienne Gilson, *La Philosophie de Saint Bonaventure* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1924), 266. “... nous rencontrons pour la première fois cette doctrine de la pluralité des formes qui embarrasse si fort ses interprètes....”

that they are substantial or give substantial being.<sup>529</sup> However, it is important here to emphasize that while this notion of a plurality of substantial forms was found to be “embarrassing” by modern scholars, i.e. relative to the unicity doctrine in Aquinas, a plurality of substantial forms was in fact the *standard* position in the time of Bonaventure and Aquinas.<sup>530</sup> Indeed, in the thirteenth century, Aquinas’ would have been the odd position.

Nevertheless, it could very well be that, while a plurality of substantial forms was standard, it was also not a very philosophically sound position, and thereby Aquinas may have been right to turn to the unicity doctrine. Accordingly, if such a doctrine of a plurality of substantial forms is a poor one, Quinn’s reluctance to say that Bonaventure considers there to be many *substantial* forms is somewhat understandable.<sup>531</sup> Attributing this position to Bonaventure is particularly worrying if we forget that Bonaventure’s forms are not like Aquinas’ forms. If Aquinas were to maintain a plurality of substantial forms, he would have many substances in one, since each time a form is put in matter, a sensible substance results – but for Bonaventure, the notion of form and individuation is much different: a particular sensible substance only results if we have a certain series of forms combined with matter. This is to say that if one approaches Bonaventure’s notion of a plurality of forms with Aquinas’ “form + matter = substance” equation, it would obviously seem absurd.

Still another worry with the doctrine of a plurality of substantial forms is that it seems to indicate an equal ontological standing of these forms *with relation to the composite*, a position which one might take for granted as a detriment to the plurality doctrine, but is not in fact present in Bonaventure’s thought – for such is (again) a plainly absurd position. For Bonaventure, the forms are not muddled together in each composite, but are ordered hierarchically according to species and genus. Thus, the forms do not bear an equal standing either when their relation to the composite is considered, or with respect to our knowledge of them. Some forms are more immediately knowable/perceivable or operative, while others are more remote – e.g., horse-ness is both more operative in the horse and more knowable than animality is.

Yet, again, there might be the worry that a doctrine of a plurality of substantial forms would imply that all of the forms a composite has are substantial, and there would be no accidental forms – e.g. a horse is substantially brown. For Bonaven-

<sup>529</sup> See pages 127–8.

<sup>530</sup> For a summary of the debate, see Robert Pasnau, “Form and Matter,” in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014), 635–646. For the discussion of the thinkers who held the pluralist position, see esp. 644–646.

<sup>531</sup> However, most other scholars of Bonaventure’s thought consider that he does indeed maintain a plurality of forms: e.g., Richard Dales, *The Problem of the Rational Soul in the Thirteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 99–107; Philotheus Boehner, *The History of the Franciscan School: John of Rupella and Saint Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1943), 68–69.

ture, this is not the case. “Substantial forms” only refer to a certain set of forms: species and genus. The rest of the forms which a composite has are accidental.<sup>532</sup> All forms, whether substantial or accidental, of course, have an equal ontological status with relation to themselves, i.e. each has being (*esse*). However, with relation to the composite it would seem absurd to say that there is no primacy of substantial over accidental forms. This claim would seem to render perception and knowledge of the sensible composite either impossible or occurring in an absurd manner, i.e. that when I approach Rye the Horse, I know him as substantially Furry just as I know him as substantially Horse – or, to put this another way, I would predicate the definition of Furriness of him just as I would the definition of Horse.

Let us now turn to how Bonaventure develops his understanding of these substantial forms. In chapter 5, we saw that forms act like the components of sensible things and that sensible things are simply the compositions of these forms. Now we need to ask: How does this coming together of the forms occur? Bonaventure writes: “[T]wo fold is the formation of corporeal creatures, some general [form], and some specific [form] – general by the form common to all corporeal things, and this is the form of *Lux*; specific by other forms....”<sup>533</sup>

This sentence has received much attention in secondary literature. Here, it is important to clarify that in this context, I wish to show that Bonaventure considers light, in this sense, to refer to (and only to) the first substantial form in all bodies. However, there are other senses in which Bonaventure uses the term light (e.g., in his epistemology). In the following discussion it is, then, key to separate out these senses of “light,” which have perhaps at most an analogical relationship.

Returning to our quotation, we can see that Quinn would naturally find this worrying since it seems to imply at least two forms at work in forming a sensible thing. Indeed, Quinn gives an interesting and creative spin on the above line: he translates *informatio* not as “formation” but as the English (false) cognate “information.” According to this translation, Quinn goes on to interpret *Lux* as a means of information, in the sense of an “extrinsic influencing” rather than the (correct) “forming in.” This gives him leeway to claim that *Lux* is not itself the first substantial form of *all* creatures, but rather the substantial form of only *some* creatures (i.e. celestial bodies). He then interprets Bonaventure to mean that “earthly bodies are

<sup>532</sup> It would also be interesting to ask whether Bonaventure thinks qualities such as “big” and “small” are forms. Given his apparent fondness for Aristotle’s *Categories*, I think he would say that they are not. In chapter 5, the stress was that forms are universals, either as species or genus – or perhaps also as properties that can be predicated of many. But when I say, e.g., small of a cat and small of a mountain, or “the horse is close to the barn” and “the man is close to the mountain,” there is no universal property common between them – rather, these terms are relational. This, however, is a topic which should be further investigated elsewhere.

<sup>533</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 13, divisio text., t. 2, p. 310a. “Et quoniam duplex est informatio materiae corporalis, quaedam generalis, quaedam specialis – generalis per formam communem omnibus corporalibus, et haec est forma lucis; specialis vero per alias formas, sive elementares sive mixtionis – ideo Magister primo agit de formatione sive productione lucis, in hac scilicet distinctione.”

*influenced* by light, whereas heavenly bodies are *formed* by light.<sup>534</sup> This means, according to Quinn, that only heavenly bodies have the substantial form of light, whereas all other bodies receive light from them:

Since terrestrial bodies are illuminated by the celestial bodies, and since the proper action of light is illumination, therefore, as a substantial form, light gives an intrinsic efficacy of acting to a celestial body, or luminary, and this body, by its proper act, transmits light to a terrestrial body, which has a proper act from its own specific form and nature. Hence, it is not necessary to conclude from this part of Bonaventure's text that, in saying when light is posited with another form in the same body, he posits a substantial form of light in every inanimate body. It is not certain ... that he posits such a form in terrestrial bodies, since they are not formed by light, because they are not lighted bodies. They are bodies undergoing an *extrinsic illumination*, for they receive the transmission of light from celestial bodies....<sup>535</sup>

Quinn's position, explained in a lengthy twenty pages, can be reduced to the following: Bonaventure does not say explicitly that *Lux* is the first substantial form of all creatures,<sup>536</sup> thus we can assume that it is only common to all creatures in the sense of being an *extrinsic illumination*, and so one can safely say that Bonaventure may hold that *Lux* is the first, and only, substantial form of celestial bodies, but not of all bodies. *Lux* is the *general information* of all creatures *only* in that terrestrial bodies receive the light of the celestial bodies which is external to the terrestrial bodies.

This is an odd position for a number of reasons. The most obvious is that it seems to attribute to celestial bodies the unique ability to produce an extrinsic illumination with regard to our ability to know sensible things, i.e. they illumine sublunary substances – which is absurd because it ignores the existence of other sources of light, such as fire or, in contemporary life, a light bulb.<sup>537</sup> Even more problematic with this reading is that Bonaventure explicitly denies that the light of heavenly bodies can be conceived of (in any sense) as a *defluxus*, insofar as this would effectively hypostasize them.<sup>538</sup> Another point which renders Quinn's position impossible is that Bonaventure attributes light even to the lowest of bodily creatures, matter: "For matter is not pure privation, rather it has, by reason of its essence, something

<sup>534</sup> John F. Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure's Philosophy* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1973), 236.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>536</sup> Quinn is missing that Bonaventure actually does say precisely that light is a *substantial form* in all bodies, but elsewhere in the *Commentary on the Sentences. In Sent.* II, d. 13, a. 2, q. 2, p. 321a. "Verum est enim, quod lux, cum sit forma nobilissima inter corporalia, sicut dicunt philosophi et sancti, secundum cuius participationem maiorem et minorem sunt corpora magis et minus entia, est substantialis forma."

<sup>537</sup> Indeed, when speaking about light (*lux*) which we would attribute to celestial bodies, Bonaventure is careful to attribute it not only to celestial bodies but to all *luminous* bodies.

<sup>538</sup> This is just a general point about the nature of light: the object illumined by the light does not depend upon the light itself for its own potency to be visible, but only for the fact that it is now visible. Any body has the potency to be visible, regardless of whether or not the light is there, but *is* only visible when there is a physical light. The causal relationship of dependence is accidental. *In Sent.* II, d. 13, a. 3, q. 1, pp. 324-326. cf. *De An.* II.7. [418b13-16].

from beauty and something from light.”<sup>539</sup> Every body has matter, hence, every body has *Lux* – not only celestial bodies.

If these points were not sufficient, we need only point out Quinn’s error in saying that “light,” taken in the common sense, is a substantial form at all. As we will discuss in detail momentarily, Bonaventure explicitly denies that light taken in the common sense, i.e. something “being a light” meaning that it is “light giving,” is ever a substantial form<sup>540</sup> – not even of celestial bodies as Quinn asserts.<sup>541</sup> As we will see Bonaventure make clear, *Lux* is the most general substantial form of all bodies, and “light-giving” is simply an accidental form of, e.g., celestial bodies (but also of anything luminous). It is apparent that Quinn is missing the distinction between these two uses of *lux/Lux* – one being *Lux* in this technical sense, being the most general (substantial) form of bodies, and the other being *lux* as simply “light-giving.” For clarity, then, I am using *Lux* for the general form and *lux* for the accidental.

Before I outline the details of these distinctions in Bonaventure’s texts, I would also like to point out that Quinn’s reading of this passage acts as a kind of red herring. Quinn wants to deny that Bonaventure maintains a plurality of substantial forms, and so, confounding the two different meanings of light, he claims that, for Bonaventure, *lux/Lux* is not a substantial form in all physical creatures. At the end of the twenty pages of discussion of this single point, even if the reader concedes and agrees that, for Bonaventure, *lux/Lux* is not a substantial form for anything except celestial bodies and instead has this strange illuminative power for terrestrial bodies, this does not mean that there is no doctrine of a plurality of substantial forms in Bonaventure’s thought, as Quinn wishes to assert. It only means that *lux/Lux* is not one of them. But what of those *alias formas*?

To address (finally) the question of what *Lux* is for Bonaventure, it is clear that it is a *substantial* form which gives existence to everything – not only celestial bodies. This is apparent when we look at the earlier quote in its full context:

Above, the Master considers the production of nature with regard to its material principle; but in this part he intends to consider its completion or formation according to its formal principle. And since the formation (*informatio*) of corporeal matter is two-fold, general and specific – general

---

<sup>539</sup> We will come back to this notion in our discussion of evil later in this chapter. *In Sent.* II, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, p. 17b. “Nam materia non est privatio pura, immo ratione suae essentiae habet aliquid de pulchritudine et aliquid de luce.”

<sup>540</sup> Gilson alone notes this distinction between light taken as a substantial form and light taken as an accidental form. Gilson, *La Philosophie de Saint Bonaventure* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1924), 265.

<sup>541</sup> It is plainly odd to say that the form of the sun is “light” since I do not predicate the definition of “light” of the sun. Quinn tries to get around this by saying that the form of light is analogically not univocally predicated, but this helps very little insofar as the ontology which Quinn has set up does not ground an analogical predication. If light is a substantial form, the definition has to be predicated univocally. In this discussion Quinn also takes the position that the form of Light is caused by seminal reasons, which again is plainly an odd position. Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure’s Philosophy* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1973), 317.



through the form common to all bodies, and this form is light; and specific through other forms, either elements or mixtures – thus the Master first considers the formation or production of light .... But next, he considers production of whatever further corporal forms....<sup>542</sup>

Designating the form of light as common to all bodies indicates its presence in *all* bodies, not only celestial bodies. Finally the “further corporeal forms” indicates *Lux* as being simply one of the corporeal forms, albeit the most important. The consideration that light from the celestial bodies has some external epistemic effect on sensible things (apart from the obvious giving of light) is notably absent from this passage – as well as from the rest of Bonaventure’s corpus.

Moreover, we see Bonaventure quite clearly indicate that it is the form of *Lux* which is responsible for making things into “beings.” Here, he addresses the question of whether *lux/Lux* is a substantial or accidental form. If Quinn’s interpretation were correct, we would expect Bonaventure to say that light is the substantial form only for celestial bodies. But he does not. He rather says:

[B]ecause light is the most noble form among bodies, just as the philosophers and the saints say, according to more or less participation in it, bodies are more or less beings (*entia*), it is substantial form. For it is true that light, because it is sensible and is an instrument of operation ... it has the nature of an accidental form.<sup>543</sup>

This is quite the opposite of Quinn’s position. Light, taken to mean *Lux*, is the form which makes bodies *be* – it is the widest genus of bodies, i.e. the most general formation – and in this sense it is a substantial form. When light, *lux*, on the other hand, indicates a sensible quality in luminous bodies – qua the sensible luminosity, i.e. the fact that they give off light – it is accidental.<sup>544</sup> The “substantial” form of a celestial body (e.g., the sun) is “sun” not “light.” I do not look at the sun and say “that is light,” but I would say “that is luminous.” “Light” in the latter sense is accidental. However,

---

<sup>542</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 26, art. unicus, q. 1, p. 279a. “Supra egit Magister de productione naturae quantum ad principium materiale; in hac vero parte intendit agere de eius completionem sive formationem quantum ad principium formale. Et quoniam duplex est informatio materiae corporalis, quaedam generalis, quaedam specialis – generalis per formam communem omnibus corporalibus, et haec est forma lucis; specialis vero per alias formas, sive elementares sive mixtionis – ideo Magister primo agit de formatione sive productione lucis.... Secundo vero agit de productione cuiuslibet alterius formae corporalis....”

<sup>543</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 13, a. 2, q. 2, p. 321a. “Verum est enim, quod lux, cum sit forma nobilissima inter corporalia, sicut dicunt philosophi et sancti, secundum cuius participationem maiorem et minorem sunt corpora magis et minus entia, est substantialis forma. Verum est etiam, quod lux cum sit per se sensibilis, sit etiam instrumentum operandi, sit etiam augmentabilis et minuibilis, salva forma substantiali, quod ipsa habet naturam formae accidentalis.”

<sup>544</sup> This is moreover consistent with the account of celestial bodies given in the *Collationes*. Bonaventure quite clearly does not call them light (or lights), but luminaries – and thereby equates them not with the light of the phrase *fiat lux*, but with God creating the firmament. See: *Hex.* XXI.1, and *Hex.* III.25-30. Likewise in the *Breviloquium* does Bonaventure make clear that the celestial bodies are luminous, not light: *Brevil.* p. II. c. 2.

I do look at the sun and say “that is a body” – and in this sense I am referring to *Lux* which is substantial, i.e. insofar as it is the general form of bodies.

Bettoni, like Boehner and Gilson,<sup>545</sup> gives a reading similar to mine on this point – i.e. that *Lux* is the form which makes bodies be bodies and thereby “prepares” the body to receive more specific forms. As Bettoni writes: “Light, in other words, is a form which acts as a fundamental and preliminary form of bodies.”<sup>546</sup> With this I am in perfect agreement. However, Bettoni goes on to deny that *Lux* is a genus: “[I]t is not a form like the others, and nor is it a form which is generic and susceptible to specification....”<sup>547</sup> This latter point is contradicted by Bonaventure’s above cited text,<sup>548</sup> where in saying that *Lux* is common to all bodies, Bonaventure indicates just that: that light is the most general form of bodies. Moreover, if *Lux* is a form, it has to be either a species or a genus (or an accident). It is unclear, then, precisely what this form of *Lux*, which is neither specific nor general, would be on Bettoni’s reading. Bettoni is right, however, to assert that *Lux* is not an accidental form, but he fails to note that there is an accidental form of light, i.e. more properly said “light-giving.” Thus, it is unclear in Bettoni’s interpretation whether this form of *Lux* is light taken in the general use of the word (i.e. light-giving) or something else.

Thus, we find in the secondary literature a confounding not only of the two different senses of light (i.e. *Lux*, the form common to all bodies, vs. *lux*, light-giving), but also that of the illuminative light of knowledge and the form of *Lux* itself. For further clarification of these two different senses of light, which should eliminate all confusion about precisely what this form of *Lux* is, we can turn to Bonaventure’s discussion of *lumen*. *Lumen* is the effect of *Lux*. It is the radius of the light which is emitted not only from luminous bodies but from any visible body – i.e. *any*

---

<sup>545</sup> Gilson is wrong, however, to attribute to this form of light an analogical relationship to God – there is no evidence for that in the texts. He simply cites Bonaventure calling it the most noble form; see: Etienne Gilson, *La Philosophie de Saint Bonaventure* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1924), 264. Gilson also does somewhat confound the notions of *Lux* and *lumen* (the latter of which we will discuss momentarily). For example, Gilson writes that the form of light is not a body – which, of course, is just obvious from the fact that it is a form. However, the point in Bonaventure which Gilson is referencing about light not being a body applies to *lumen*, which is properly a radius of light. *La Philosophie de Saint Bonaventure* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1924), 264. I say only “somewhat” confounds, because later, he separates out the two terms, *lumen* and *Lux*. Gilson, *La Philosophie de Saint Bonaventure* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1924), 270–272.

<sup>546</sup> “La luce, in altre parole, si comporta come una forma fondamentale e pregiudiziale dei corpi...” Efreem Bettoni, *S. Bonaventura da Bagnoregio: gli aspetti filosofici del suo pensiero* (Milan: Ediz. Biblioteca Franciscana, 1973), 142.

<sup>547</sup> “... essa non è una forma fra le altre, e nemmeno è una forma generica e suscettibile di specificazioni...” Efreem Bettoni, *S. Bonaventura da Bagnoregio: gli aspetti filosofici del suo pensiero* (Milan: Ediz. Biblioteca Franciscana, 1973), 142.

<sup>548</sup> Boehner and Gilson, as I do, consider *Lux* to be precisely a generic form. See: Philotheus Boehner, *The History of the Franciscan School: Saint Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1941), 64–66. See the above referenced texts for Gilson’s position.

body.<sup>549</sup> *Lumen*, properly speaking, is itself not a body – it is not perceivable. Quoting Aristotle, Bonaventure writes: “*Lumen* is neither body nor an emanation from a body.”<sup>550</sup> Rather, *lumen* – insofar as it is attributed, first of all, to luminous bodies, i.e. celestial bodies (or any body which by nature emits light, e.g., fire) – indicates a “substantial active power,” because these bodies are luminous by nature, and they produce an active power to illuminate other things. The sun, for example, generates light which illumines the sublunary world – and it always does this because to be a sun is to give forth light. The *power*, then, is substantial, while the *form* “luminous” or “light-giving,” as we saw above, is merely accidental.

However, secondly, with regard to bodies in general, *lumen* indicates an accidental power, i.e. to be visible: “But not only does *lumen* indicate that active power, which is not perceived by the senses, but also that sensible quality...and this is an accidental quality...”<sup>551</sup> This power simply to be visible, unlike the *lumen* which Bonaventure only attributes to luminous bodies, is an accidental power because a body is not, and does not need to be, always visible, as the sun is always light-giving – e.g., it might be night and so a certain body is no longer visible. This power to be visible applies not only to sublunary bodies but to all bodies including luminous bodies as well. If the sun stops being visible (accidental power), e.g., when it is nighttime, it does not cease to be a sun. If the sun, however, stops emitting light (substantial power), it does cease to be a sun. For clarity, we can summarize the different ways of discussing *lux/Lux* and *lumen* in the following chart:

Form			Power	
Lux 1: general (substantial) form in all bodies	definition of body is predicated of bodies	→	lumen 1: substantial power (only for luminous bodies)	the power to give light
			lumen 2: accidental power (for all bodies)	the power to be visible
lux 2: accidental form (only in luminous bodies)	the attribute, light giving, or luminous, is predicated of celestial bodies			

<sup>549</sup> This is to say, non-luminous bodies emit a light, i.e. simply in the fact that they are visible to us. They do not, however, generate their own light the way a sun does.

<sup>550</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 13, a. 3, q. 1, p. 324a. “Lumen nec est corpus nec defluxus corporis.” *De An.* II.7. 418b13-16.

<sup>551</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 13, a. 3, q. 2, p. 328b. “Non solem autem lumen dicit illam vim activam, quam non percipit sensus, sed etiam quandam qualitatem sensibilem, qua sensus visus efficitur sentiens in actu; et illa est qualitas accidentalis in tertia specie qualitatis.”

The above discussion shows that Bonaventure clearly distinguishes between *Lux*, which is a substantial form common to all bodies, and *lux*, or light-giving, which is merely an accident which we say of bodies, along with *lumen*, which is a (substantial or accidental) power, not a form. Indeed, one has to be careful not to confound these different uses, e.g., to confound the substantial power of lumen (which indicates merely an accidental form, light-giving) with the substantial form *Lux* – a confusion which would result in a position similar to Quinn’s – or, again, to confound the accidental power of sensible things with the substantial form of *Lux*. Quite clearly, the context is of key importance: Is Bonaventure speaking about the most general form of bodies, *Lux*, or is he speaking merely of the accidental form, light-giving, or is he speaking not about forms, but about powers?

Moreover, from the preceding discussion, we can also see that attributing *Lux* to all bodies is not as implausible of a position as it appeared to be to modern scholars. *Lux* is simply the first and most general form which is the widest genus of natural bodies, and following the form of *Lux*, the composite then receives less general, more specific forms – forms which make it what it is. Indeed, at first glance this notion of *Lux* in Bonaventure might have appeared to be a kind of mystical thing, but this is not so. Bonaventure treats it in a fairly cursory manner in the *Commentary on the Sentences* since describing it as the most general form is fairly self-explanatory. It is only the fact that Bonaventure attributes this role of first form to *Lux* that perhaps seems somewhat odd. Yet, it seems quite understandable given the fact that *Lux* has a Biblical connotation, i.e. God creating light first among his creatures: *fiat lux*.<sup>552</sup> Thus, it makes sense that *Lux* would be the first and most general of forms and would be attributed to all corporeal things.

If *Lux* then is the first form, i.e. “the general formation of bodies,” what of these other forms that constitute the specific formation of bodies? Boehner writes in regard to our original passage about the twofold formation of corporeal things: “For all bodies have at least two forms: the general form of *Lux* and their specific form.”<sup>553</sup> Boehner’s interpretation points out that there is an ambiguity in the text: Bonaventure does not write that the *informatio* is specific *per aliam formam* (through another form, meaning a *single* secondary form); instead, he writes *per alias formas* – through other forms, using the plural. Here, he may be referring to the entire possible set *aliarum formarum* from which a single form may be selected to fulfill this second place, as Boehner thinks is an option. However, it seems more

---

<sup>552</sup> Here one should also note that this idea is coming most certainly from Robert Grosseteste. Grosseteste applies the form of *Lux*, however, not to developing a notion of particular hylomorphic composites, but to understanding the order in which God created (i.e. what God created on each day of creation). Nevertheless, like Bonaventure, *Lux*, for Grosseteste, is the first corporeal form. For a summary of Grosseteste’s position, see: Francesco Agnoli, *Roberto Grossatesta: La filosofia della luce* (Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 2007), 44–56.

<sup>553</sup> Philotheus Boehner, *The History of the Franciscan Institute: Part II, Saint Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: St. Bonaventure Univ., 1944), 64.

likely that by using the plural, Bonaventure is referring to the set of specific forms which are contained in a hylomorphic composite, a (necessary) plurality within the second component of the *informatio*. When Bonaventure says that the *informatio* is twofold, he does not mean that the division is: (1) general form of *Lux*, (2) specific form, as Boehner thinks could be the bare minimum.<sup>554</sup> Rather, the twofold nature of the *informatio* is (1) the general form *Lux*, (2) a plurality of specific forms (*alias formas*). Indeed, it seems unlikely that there is in existence something that has the form *Lux* and only one other form, because this second facet of the formation of sensible things is only *more* specific than the form of *Lux*; i.e. the first form beyond *Lux* would only still be a genus – yet nothing exists which would not fall under a species below a genus, particularly a genus as wide as *Lux*. There is no animal which is not a cat or a horse, nor is there a celestial body which is not a sun or a moon. Thus, it seems that for the specific formation, we need – in addition to light – more than one other form, i.e. not only a genus but also a species.

Let us now turn to the question of how these forms come together with matter to create a sensible composite. As we saw in a preliminary way above, it is the form of *Lux* which is the first form in all sensible things as the most general genus – it makes bodies be bodies and, in this sense, makes them be. We saw this echoed again in Bonaventure's claim that even matter has goodness and beauty insofar as it has *Lux* – albeit minimally. *Lux*, then, acting as the first form orders other forms within the sensible composite insofar as it dictates the possible differentia, i.e. it begins the hierarchy of forms within any particular sensible thing – thus, we have the “twofold formation” of corporeal matter. Moreover, it is the nature of the form of *Lux*, i.e. as the widest genus which encompasses all of these forms by hierarchizing them, which gives order to the forms in sensible things.<sup>555</sup>

With respect to the hierarchy of forms within corporeal things, while Bonaventure does not give us a treatise on the categories of substance and accident, we can see implied in his texts that there is a division between substantial forms and accidental forms – precisely insofar as we find him asserting that certain attributes are accidental while other are substantial, as we have seen him do throughout the discussion of *Lux*, even though he never defines the standard for these distinctions. As he writes: “Nor can it be true, that the distinction of the individual is from the accidents when individuals differ according to substance, not only according

---

<sup>554</sup> I think, however, Boehner would be right if he were referring to the empyrean which is itself just light. But this is an exception among corporeal things, and Boehner does not explicitly mention the empyrean in this context.

<sup>555</sup> It also should be noted that while *Lux* plays this hierarchizing role in corporeal things, it does not play this role in incorporeal things, as we have already mentioned. Indeed, such a hierarchizing principle would not be necessary insofar as soul (angelic or human) is simply one substantial form, i.e. the form of the soul, united with (spiritual) matter.

to accidents.”<sup>556</sup> Thus, it seems fair to conclude that *only* those qualities which are necessary to the sensible composite and whose definition is said of the composite (e.g., animality or equinity) are substantial forms – i.e. anything which we would call a secondary substance in the *Categories*.<sup>557</sup>

Here, we can see that a doctrine of a plurality of substantial forms within Bonaventure’s thought does not give equal weight to all forms *with regard to their relation* to the composite – because forms are ordered within a composite first of all by *Lux* into a hierarchy of genus/species when they are within a composite. For example, the sun first of all has the form of *Lux*, and as a subgenus, celestial body, and again its species, sun – then we have a stark divide, and I can then attribute to the sun accidental properties, such as “moves around the earth” or “night-hidden.”<sup>558</sup> The fact that these are hierarchized in such a way makes it possible that when I look at the sun, I don’t think that this bright yellow thing is “night hiddenness.” Nevertheless because “night-hidden” is an accidental property, I can still attribute it to the sun, though in the category of an accident – not as a substantial form.

We can also highlight the fact that a doctrine of a plurality of substantial forms is something assumed by Bonaventure rather than explicitly spelt out – indeed, in a manner similar to Aristotle, who likewise does not identify *one* form as being *the* substantial form.<sup>559</sup> Indeed, as in Aristotle, this “doctrine” of a plurality of substantial forms in Bonaventure is precisely (and only) the *absence* of asserting that it is one form which, when compounded with matter, results in a substance. Bonaventure, again like Aristotle, considers a form to be substantial when it indicates the substance, or the essence, of something: white does not do this, humanity and animality do – i.e. there is no particular thing of which I predicate the definition of white, but there are things of which I predicate the definition of *both* animality and humanity. It is this division between things which are predicated in the manner of, e.g., humanity and animality, and things predicated in the manner of, e.g., whiteness or brownness, which Bonaventure’s account of the forms is seeking to maintain – and, indeed, a division which it simply would not occur to him to

---

<sup>556</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 3, p. 1, a. 2, q. 2, p. 106a. “Nec potest habere veritatem, quod distinctio individualis sit ab accidentibus cum individua differant secundum substantiam, non solum secundum accidens.” Here, Bonaventure is arguing against an “accidental” theory of individuation, in which an individual would be an individual in virtue of the set of accidents it has. John Peckham similarly argues against this position, *Summa de Esse et Essentia* 7. For more on this position generally in the Middle Ages, see: J.J.E. Gracia, *Introduction to the Problem of Individuation in the Early Middle Ages* (Munich: Philosophia-Verlag, 1988), 36-45, esp. 40-42.

<sup>557</sup> This is why, for example, Bonaventure called light an accident of celestial bodies – we do not predicate the definition of light of them.

<sup>558</sup> Then, of course, we can also attribute powers to the substance, such as the power to give light or the power to be visible.

<sup>559</sup> Here, I do not mean to say that Aristotle necessarily would agree with Bonaventure’s position, but rather that a unicity doctrine is something which secondary scholarship has had to pull out of Aristotle, not something which is explicit in his texts.

re-conceive.<sup>560</sup> Aquinas' account of composites, on the other hand, relinquishes this quite Aristotelian division by giving to "humanity" alone the title of "substantial." Indeed, Aquinas' standard for what is and what is not a substantial form is quite innovative, insofar as, for Aquinas, whether a form is substantial or not is tied *not* to how we know or predicate the form of the substance, as Bonaventure derives it from Aristotle – rather, it is tied to his own claim that it is one form which when combined with matter results in one particular substance, and whichever form that is, is the substantial one.

### 3. CAUSATION

We now must address how causation works among composites, causation which is secondary in relation to God's causation, e.g., men being generated from other men. We discussed this notion of secondary causation briefly in the previous chapter, but only insofar as it related to God's causal efficacy. There, we addressed causal reasons of the uncreated kind, so let us now turn to causal reasons which are rather created, i.e. the third column of our chart of causes and reasons from chapter 6:

reason	God	universal form	seminal reason
cause	universal form	seminal reason (i.e. particularized form)	semen
effect	the particular (form/composite)	particular man	particular man
	more particular	—————→	

Naturally, there are things which are caused simply by chance. Barring this, however, Bonaventure, taking his cue from Aristotle, considers that something is always caused for some purpose, and this purpose is designated either by nature or by a will.<sup>561</sup> Accordingly, we can divide created causes into two: (1) causation occurring according to nature and (2) causation occurring according to a will, i.e. caused by an intellect. The causal efficacy of an intellect is fairly self-explanatory and so Bonaventure does not provide much discussion of it in this context and instead moves on to the other type of causation which occurs naturally.<sup>562</sup>

<sup>560</sup> Here, one might wonder about God's causality with relation to composition. If we say that God causes the forms, one might wonder if God does not cause the composition *qua* composition, i.e. if he causes not only the parts (i.e. the forms) but also the parts being in a certain thing in a certain order. The generation of the particular we will address momentarily, but from the preceding discussion we can see that if it is the form of *Lux* which begins the hierarchization of the forms within the composite and God causes forms (including *Lux*), then we have our answer, i.e. in causing *Lux*, God also causes the organization of the composite. And thus, "all composition, according to that composition, is from God." *In Sent.* II, d. 37, a. 1. q. 3, p. 867b. "Omnis compositio, secundum quod compositio, est a Deo."

<sup>561</sup> *Phys.* II.5.

<sup>562</sup> We will come back to a discussion of the will when we look at the notion of evil.

Bonaventure then distinguishes more precisely things occurring by nature into causation according to (1) seminal reasons and (2) natural reasons – two terms which Bonaventure until now has more or less run together. The relationship between seminal and natural reasons is analogous to the relationship (in God) between primordial and causal reasons.<sup>563</sup> In themselves, seminal and natural reasons are the same thing (i.e. the particularized natural form), but we can distinguish them conceptually. As Bonaventure writes: “For, since the semen indicates that out of which (*ex quo*), and nature indicates that by which (*a quo*), the seminal reason, insofar as it gives direction to the power of nature, is directed so that out of it something occurs; the natural reason, however, is that *from which* something occurs.”<sup>564</sup> This distinction can be put in another way: “The seminal reason regards inchoate and intrinsic power, which moves and operates towards the production of an effect; but the natural reason concerns the assimilation of production towards what is produced and a habitual way of acting.”<sup>565</sup>

It is good to remember that Bonaventure has made a distinction between the universal form, which is complete and in act, and the particularized form, which is the universal form considered insofar as it bears a relation to a composition and thereby is in potency and not complete. When we consider this particularized form, we can think of its causal efficacy in two ways: it is both the beginning, *ex quo*, and the agency, *a quo*. A foal, for example, has the seminal reason of horse-ness but it is incomplete, i.e. not in act, but in potency. Our foal then grows up to be a horse because it had that potency to be a horse (i.e. the seminal reason), and what it aims at being is precisely *to be a horse* (i.e. the natural reason). The seminal reason then is the natural form considered as that power from which an effect comes to be, while the natural reason is the natural form considered as that towards which an effect is directed. However, this is simply two ways of looking at the same thing – ontologically, they are both that particularized potency – while the universal, by contrast, is the form in act. Of course, absolutely speaking, the form in act is also the cause of sensible things insofar as it is the actuality towards which generation occurs and has as its goal – but proximately speaking, the potency is the cause, insofar as no generation can occur without the potency for it occurring. Here, we can see quite clearly that this potency is at once both the seminal reason and the natural reason, insofar as this potency may be considered in two ways, i.e. conceptually: in one way the potency, as a seminal reason, indicates simply the fact that something has the power

---

<sup>563</sup> As we discussed in chapter 5.

<sup>564</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 436b. “Quia enim semen dicit ut ex quo, et natura dicit a quo, ratio seminalis attenditur, in quantum dirigit potentiam naturae, ut ex aliquo fiat aliquid; naturalis vero, ut ab aliquo fiat aliquid.”

<sup>565</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 436b. “Vel ratio seminalis respicit inchoationem et intrinsecam virtutem, quae movet et operatur ad effectus productionem; naturalis vero concernit producentis ad productum assimilationem et modi agendi assuetudinem.”



to become something else; but considered in another way, this potency is precisely a potency to *some end* and the end that the potency has in view is the natural reason.

Here, we can again bring back the worry of calling anything which has the potency to become something else a seminal reason, e.g., bread having the potency to become man. Bonaventure clarifies that the seminal reason is only a seminal reason if it is *propinqua et sufficiens*, e.g., as semen is with regard to the generation of a human body.<sup>566</sup> Thus, we say that the semen has in it the seminal reason of a man. In other instances, however, the potency is *remota et insufficiens*, e.g., “in bread or food, so that from it is made a man.”<sup>567</sup> The latter (e.g., bread) is not a seminal reason for man, because there is a series of intermediary causes which must enter into play in order for the bread or food to become a man: it must first “be eaten and digested and converted into humors, and then in the genitals converted into semen, and then into a man.”<sup>568</sup> It is thereby absurd to say in bread or food, there is a seminal reason for being a man. We can see this even more plainly now that we have seen the equation of seminal reasons and natural reasons – there is indeed nothing in bread that directs it towards the end of being the body of a man. If Bonaventure had not made that equation of natural reasons and seminal reasons, a doctrine of seminal reasons could potentially be quite a slippery slope: if we say in semen is the seminal reason of a man, why not in bread the seminal reason of man, or further in wheat, or in dirt? By restricting the potency of a seminal reason to a natural reason, the seminal reason can operate only according to nature, e.g., a rib cannot generate a woman by nature and therefore it does not.

Moreover, we see here how Bonaventure has given an Aristotelian spin on this Augustinian notion of secondary causation, insofar as he is quite insistent that these seminal reasons are simply natural forms, i.e. potencies in sensible things – a point on which Augustine was not so clear.<sup>569</sup> Nonetheless, Bonaventure sees himself not as abandoning Augustine’s account altogether, but using Aristotle to expand upon Augustine’s basic notion of seminal reasons in order to make the account more coherent. He says as much himself in a different question where he has likewise spelled out this notion of seminal reasons: “This position is more rational

---

<sup>566</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 435a. “Sed attendendum est, quod illa potentia naturae ad effectus istos aut est propinqua et sufficiens, sicut est in semine deciso a lumbis ad generationem humani corporis; et sic dicitur proprie habere se rationem seminalem; aut est remota et insufficiens, sicut est in pane vel alimento, ut ex eo fiat homo; et sic minus proprie dicitur esse ratio seminalis respectu hominis producendi, nisi vale accipiatur.”

<sup>567</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 435a. “... sicut est in pane vel in alimento, ut ex eo fiat homo...”

<sup>568</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 2, p. 435a. “Quod autem sic est in remota dispositione respectu effectus, aut perducitur ad illum effectum mediantibus illis, ad quae habebat ordinem immediatum, aut immediate. Si mediante, tunc potest dici, quod effectus ille sit secundum rationem seminalem, utpote si panis comedatur et digeratur et convertatur in humorem, et postmodum in lumbis convertatur in semen, deinde in hominem.”

<sup>569</sup> As we saw in Chapter 5, vis-à-vis the issue with Eve and the rib of Adam.

and firm, because Augustine and Aristotle equally agree upon it.”<sup>570</sup> He then quotes Augustine *ad Orosium*: “Just as the seed of any tree has a certain power, that, while it may be corrupted into earth, it rises up, and produces branches ... so it is in the body...”<sup>571</sup> Aristotle communicates something similar in *Generation of Animals*, which Bonaventure summarizes: “[V]egetative and sensible things are first in *seeds* in potency, then they are led forth into being...”<sup>572</sup>

There is a further concern in Bonaventure’s mind to which he sees seminal reasons as a solution. If one is to deny a doctrine of seminal reasons, one comes very close to the position that secondary agents themselves produce new forms. In such a case, only the first set of forms would be caused by God and all other forms would be caused by secondary agents. Aquinas, for example, sees no need to posit seminal reasons and instead asserts that a secondary cause (i.e. a creature) can bring forth a *likeness* of itself in a begotten creature, i.e. it can pass on a duplicate of the form it possesses and thereby produce an identical but nevertheless new and distinct form.<sup>573</sup> For Aquinas, God, as cause, certainly concurs with his creation (i.e. is causally present throughout the temporal existence of the created order), with regard to creation’s being, beauty, goodness. However, with regard to the formal content of creation we perhaps have an issue: that Aquinas is asserting that God causes forms and then a likeness is passed on from creature to creature. It seems then we would have a set of forms put in nature at the moment of creation and then the forms duplicate their own likenesses until nature comes to an end. God is present as cause always, yet only insofar as he conserves the being, beauty, goodness, etc. of his creation.

For Bonaventure, however, God concurs with his creation *fundamentally* via its formal content – since all that exists and all that God causes are the forms. Accordingly, his notion of how generation occurs via seminal reasons explains how the *presence* of the form itself can be transferred from one creature to the next, without a new form having to be generated in every new composite. When a man generates another man, it is not that the form of humanity is being remade in the second man, but only that a seminal reason is being made – which is itself only a particu-

<sup>570</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 15, a. 1, q. 1. p. 374a. “Haec autem positio rationabilior est et firmior, quia concordant in hoc tam Augustinus quam Philosophus.”

<sup>571</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 15, a. 1, q. 1. p. 374a. “Sicut semen cuiuslibet arboris habet quandam vim, ut, cum corruptum fuerit in terra, oriatur, et virgultum producat, deinde ramis nihilominus constipata dilectetur et frondibus, deinde eisdem floribus decorata fructificet; ita est in corpore, ut ita dicam quoddam seminarium, unde suo tempore, curante providentia Dei, aliqua genera animalium oriantur.”

<sup>572</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 15, a. 1, q. 1. p. 374a. “Hoc etiam vult Philosophus in decimo sexto Animalium [c. 3 seqq.; cf. *ibid.* libro III, c. 11], ubi ostendit, quod vegetabilis et sensibilis prius sunt in semine in potentia, quam educantur in esse; et ibi videtur innuere, quod illud format membra, non est aliud quam ipsa anima; et illam animam vocat potentiam activam, intrinsecam ipsi semini, quae, cum corpus ex semine productum est et organizatum, ut possit ab eadem perfici, prodit in actum et efficitur perfectio corporis physici organici.”

<sup>573</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, q. 45, a. 5.

larization of a universal form, the universal form itself remaining independent of this process.<sup>574</sup> Moreover, if we recall from the preceding chapter how all of these causes/reasons function relatively to one another, we see that these processes, just as generation, occur, first of all, proximately, according to the seminal reason, and then, absolutely, according to the universal reason (i.e. the form) – and ultimately, according to the exemplar reason (i.e. God himself). Thus, when we see what appears to be one composite transferring a form to another, all that is really occurring is that the same form, caused by God, is appearing as a particularized potency, i.e. as a seminal reason, in another composite. While we see these particularizations appearing and disappearing, there is nothing at work here but the one universal form – i.e. as it appears in different spatial-temporal locations.

There are two comments I would like to make regarding Bonaventure's notion of causation among sensible things. The first is somewhat of an interesting side point (or, rather, a digression) regarding how Bonaventure's notion is more consistent with modern evolutionary biology than Aquinas' is. Since, in Bonaventure's account, there was not one set of forms stamped in matter at the beginning of creation, there is nothing to prevent new forms from appearing in compositions – the forms always were/are (*esse*) but simply had not yet appeared (*existere*) or appeared as they truly are (*esse*). Or, as Bonaventure writes, “while all things were created at once, nevertheless they were not all made at once.”<sup>575</sup> Indeed, the incompatibility with evolutionary theory has long been a criticism of Aquinas' notion of forms, and one which Bonaventure's alternative quite neatly avoids. Bonaventure's forms, since they themselves are what exist, can be arranged and rearranged at no harm to themselves.

Of course, there have been many attempts at synthesizing Aquinas' account of natural species with Darwin's, such as found in the Neothomist, Jacques Maritain.<sup>576</sup> However, Maritain's idea of evolution is emphatically *thomiste* and not explicitly found in Aquinas himself, as Maurer rightly notes.<sup>577</sup> This issue of the apparent incompatibility of Aquinas' philosophy with evolution also preoccupied Gilson for much of his later career, resulting in the work *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again: A Journey in Final Causality*.<sup>578</sup> The problem of evolution is very clearly one which worried Gilson, a worry which certainly was exacerbated by Teilhard de

<sup>574</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, the semen which actually generates the second man is a further particularization of the seminal reason and thereby acts in accordance with the seminal reason.

<sup>575</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 12, a. 1, q. 2, p. 297b. “Omnes igitur Sancti in hoc concordant, quod omnia sunt simul producta in materia; et ideo concedunt omnia simul esse creata, sed tamen non simul facta.”

<sup>576</sup> Jacques Maritain, “Vers une idée thomiste de l'évolution,” in *Approches sans entraves* (Paris: Fayard, 1973), 106–162.

<sup>577</sup> For an analysis of Maritain's (heavily interpretive) reading of Aquinas regarding evolution in contrast with Aquinas himself (as well as with Suarez), see: Armand Maurer, “Darwin, Thomists, and Secondary Causality,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 57, no.3 (Mar. 2004): 491–514.

<sup>578</sup> Etienne Gilson, *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again: A Journey in Final Causality*, trans. John Lyon (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

Chardin's *Le phénomène humain*, published in 1955. Gilson's ultimate position on the issue ends up being notably unclear: neither wishing to deny evolution entirely, nor to affirm it. Vernon J. Bourke summarizes Gilson's position, speaking positively of it, although apparently unaware of the how problematic this position is: "If Etienne Gilson is right (and I think he is), then the whole notion of the evolution of biological species is utter nonsense. He claims in this book that there are no real species to evolve. Individual living things really exist, and some such individuals resemble each other more than they do other things – and thus they form a conventional class."<sup>579</sup> There we have it: Gilson's solution regarding evolution is that universal species and genus are simply *conventional* or, may I say, nominal.

For Bonaventure, quite clearly, there is no need to take such a route. While Aquinas' forms only attain an existence when they are in sensible things and thereafter never change, Bonaventure's forms exist regardless of their instantiation; thus, while *they* never change, they may nonetheless appear and disappear from their spatio-temporal instantiations – and appear to us in differently ways, as though species were evolving. For Gilson's interpretation of Aquinas, the best we can do when faced with the question of evolution is either deny evolution or highlight the nominalist tendency in Aquinas' thought when it comes to the universality of species – neither of which, I think it is fair to say, are desirable positions for a realist. We can also note that the issue of evolution is also important for scholarship on Aristotle's physics/metaphysics.<sup>580</sup> Accordingly, an added benefit of Bonaventure's interpretation of Aristotle is that it would rescue Aristotle from criticisms based on modern evolution.

The second point is that Bonaventure's schematic of how causation occurs among creatures ends up being more Aristotelian than Aquinas'. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle makes clear that he wishes his account of the forms to do what Plato's did not: to explain existence, motion, and change among sensible things. Aquinas' forms do not do this – the forms in themselves don't explain the existence of anything; God explains the existence of everything. Aquinas' forms exist, and exist actually, and are final causes of things – but not in the sense that they are for Bonaventure, insofar as for Aquinas the forms themselves depend ontologically on the composite. Thus, the sense in which they are said to be causes, is rather more in the sense of calling them explanations. God, for Aquinas, is the only ontologically prior principle of the sensible world, not the forms.<sup>581</sup>

---

<sup>579</sup> Vernon J. Bourke, "Review: From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again," *The Modern Schoolman* 63, no. 4 (May 1989): 298.

<sup>580</sup> See, for example: Fran O'Rourke, "Aristotle and the Metaphysics of Evolution," *The Review of Metaphysics* 58, no. 1 (2004): 3–59. An added benefit, then, of Bonaventure's interpretation of Aristotle is that it would rescue Aristotle from criticisms based on modern evolution.

<sup>581</sup> The primacy of God as effectively the *only* being, goodness, and final cause which exists in itself is a notion which we certainly do not find in Aristotle.

Moreover, Bonaventure's account of the objects of our knowledge very much sets the foundation for scientific inquiry. While we would think perhaps at first glance that Aquinas is the more empirically minded of the two, this is not so. For Aquinas, if we want to know what things are (i.e. a universal definition), we arrive at – as we have shown via Bonaventure's arguments in chapter 4 – a conceptualism or a nominalism, where the object of our inquiry is not something which grounds the existence of the natural substance, but rather something which exists only in the mind. Then again, if we inquire why something occurs, e.g., why does a man generate another man, again our answer – the universal reason for this occurring – is the concept of humanity which exists only in the mind. We only arrive at a real cause which is anything more than a name, or a concept, attributed to nature by the mind when we ask: Why does this man exist? Yet, here the cause is not to be found in nature, but outside of the natural order: God. This is to say, in the philosophy of Aquinas, there is an inevitable gap between our sense knowledge of particular things and our attainment of the real knowledge of universals, both universal rules and forms. In the course of a scientific inquiry, it is unclear how one moves from the sensible knowledge of the particular, which does not and cannot provide knowledge of a universal, to knowledge of the universal itself if this universal does not exist extra-mentally and ontologically prior to the contingent existence of sensible particulars. Thus, scientific inquiry is stripped of its attachment to an extra-mental reality, and only theology can claim a real knowledge of a cause of natural phenomena (i.e. God).

For Bonaventure, such is not the case – precisely because Bonaventure has posited the objects of scientific inquiry, i.e. universal forms (natural rules or reasons), existing extra-mentally as the *components* of sensible phenomena. Because nature consists of these universals, we can get at a coherent account of natural phenomena just from nature itself. We neither have need of universal concepts which derive their existence purely from the human mind (in the manner of the conceptualist, or even Kant), nor of God to explain the immediate existence of and reasons for natural phenomena. The forms do this already in Bonaventure's system – and nature exists unto itself as a coherent whole which can be the object of scientific inquiry. This is to say, in Bonaventure's ontology, I can understand why and how physical and temporal things exist by looking only to the forms. They exist outside of my mind and ground the natural phenomena themselves just as much as they ground my knowledge of these phenomena. God's causal efficacy then is only relevant when we ask the cause of the forms – or, as we saw in the previous chapter, when one wants to know not the reason for a particular phenomenon, e.g., a man generating a man, but the reason for this universal rule, e.g., why do men generate men?

Indeed, this account of scientific inquiry within the parameters of the natural order established by Bonaventure sounds entirely compatible with the scientific method of Aristotle – that is, the focus on the movement from sensible particulars

to underlying universals which are alone the objects of knowledge and scientific inquiry. As Aristotle writes of this movement: “If, however, by observing repeated instances we had succeeded in grasping the universal, we should have our proof; because it is from the repetition of particular experiences that we obtain our view of the universal. The value of the universal is that it exhibits its cause.”<sup>582</sup> Moreover, quite clearly expressing the way in which scientific inquiry finds its object in nature, Aristotle begins the *Physics* with the remark: “Hence, in advancing to that which is intrinsically more luminous and by its nature accessible to deeper knowledge, we must start from what is more immediately within our cognition, through its own nature less fully accessible to understanding” – these immediate things being “concrete and particular” and the object of inquiry being “abstract and general.”<sup>583</sup> Accordingly, we have attained knowledge of a natural phenomenon only, as Aristotle writes, “when we are acquainted with its ultimate causes and first principles, and have got down to its elements.”<sup>584</sup> For Bonaventure, the forms – considered both as the objects of knowledge qua definitions, and as operative principles in natural phenomenon qua universal reasons – are precisely these elements towards which scientific inquiry aims.

#### 4. EVIL

Insofar as we have now addressed the way in which composites are ordered and individuated, as well as how they interact causally, we seem to have one final aspect of the composition of creatures to address. Among composite things we find something which we do not find among the forms: evil. As we saw in the previous chapter, Bonaventure’s notion of a God beyond being is derived from Dionysius. Accordingly, Bonaventure has set up the same metaphysical point of departure as Dionysius, who in good Neoplatonic fashion understands evil, or non-being, as also caused by God, i.e. insofar as God himself is beyond being he can account for the “existence” of non-being among his creation. However, in Dionysius, this amounts to a very general claim about how evil may be caused by God insofar as it does not address the ontological status of evil in itself precisely as a component. Here, Bonaventure spells out more explicitly the details of this ontological status of evil in the physical world, i.e. what evil is and how it exists in composites, as well as how we can understand a principle of goodness to be the cause of it – drawing on positions of Aristotle to do so.

Bonaventure’s discussion of evil is situated within a series of questions concerning sin, and so it is good to keep in mind that he is primarily speaking about evil acts which human beings perform or evil which can be attributed to a human soul,

---

<sup>582</sup> *Post. An.* I.31 88a3-7.

<sup>583</sup> *Phys.* I.1. 184a17-22.

<sup>584</sup> *Phys.* I.1 184a13-15.

i.e. evil actions and evil people. Nevertheless, the notion of evil which Bonaventure develops— since indeed he defines its ontological status — would be applicable to all other types of evils as well, e.g., sickness or misfortune. Bonaventure does also mention these types of evils, too, but they are not treated as a topic unto itself.

To give a bit of context to what Bonaventure will develop regarding the question of evil in composite things: the standard Augustinian position, of course, is that evil is the privation of being, since “being” and “goodness” are convertible terms. Thus, God does not cause evil because evil does not exist. However, this account of evil being a privation of being or goodness, does not explain the fact that often it is the privation itself which renders a substance to be viewed as good or desirable. Oddly, this is something that Augustine explains from a psychological perspective, e.g., the well-known story of Augustine stealing the pears precisely because it was a bad thing to do. This seems, however, not quite to line up with the ontology which he develops. If things are desirable because they are good, how can the evil aspect of something, if it does not even exist, be in anyway responsible for rendering the composite itself desirable? This inconsistency seems to be what Bonaventure targets in his account of evil, which we can boil down to the following: while the evil component itself is not caused by God, the manner in which it is composed, or present, in the composite — in such manner which renders the composite good and desirable — is caused by God.

Turning now to the texts, Bonaventure begins his discussion of evil by introducing a nuance, which should strike one as surprising coming from a predominantly Augustinian context: “[E]vil or sin may be understood in two ways: one way in the abstract, and one way in the concrete.”<sup>585</sup> Evil considered *only* in abstraction “is not something, but nothing, because it is neither a being nor a good, but the privation of good.”<sup>586</sup> This is to say, when I hold any evil as the object of my mind, what I am considering is a privation, e.g., injustice in a soul is precisely not having justice. Considered *in concreto*, however, evil *is* something: “But according to evil which is said in the concrete, so does it concern that which de-forms some action or some substance, and so evil is said to be an evil thing, hence evil action or evil soul.”<sup>587</sup> He concludes: “And in this way, evil is said to be an evil thing and to have *esse naturae*.”<sup>588</sup> Indeed, one would have expected Bonaventure to say the reverse: that

---

<sup>585</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 34, a. 2, q. 3, p. 815a. “Dicendum, quod malum sive peccatum dupliciter potest accipi: uno modo abstractivè, alio modo concretivè.”

<sup>586</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 34, a. 2, q. 3, p. 815a. “Contingit iterum loqui de malo sive de peccato abstractivè; et hoc modo malum sive peccatum in recto sive praedicatione formali, non est aliquid, sed nihil, quia non est ens nec bonum, sed privatio boni.”

<sup>587</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 34, a. 2, q. 3, p. 815a. “Secundum autem quod malum dicitur concretivè, sic concernit illud quod deformat, vel actionem, vel aliquam substantiam; et sic dicitur malum res mala, utpote actio mala, vel anima mala.”

<sup>588</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 34, a. 2, q. 3, p. 815a. “Et hoc modo malum aliquid est et habet esse naturae.”

considered in abstraction, evil can be considered as something, but in the concrete, it is nothing. Yet, he rather says that evil has a kind of being.

Bonaventure clarifies this position by recalling his distinction between *esse* and *bene esse*. Attributing *bene esse* to forms designates them as *esse ordinatum*, i.e. that they order creatures to their ends. He continues on to say that when “this evil or sinful thing is said to be nothing, this is said with regard to it having *bene esse*, which is *esse ordinatum*”<sup>589</sup> – i.e. the privation is not of *esse* but of *bene esse*. What Bonaventure is getting at here is that it is somewhat absurd to say that evil does not have some kind of existence, e.g., if a soul is evil there is an actual thing existing out there, e.g., the soul, and it has a real attribute, “being evil.” However, the “presence” of evil in, e.g., a soul, indicates a privation not of being altogether, but of *bene esse* – i.e. the evil is said with regard to the final cause of the soul. Saying, e.g., “this is a good horse” or “this is a bad horse,” simply means one horse is doing a better job of attaining its end than the other. Something can have the *esse* of the form, e.g., the form of the soul or of horse, without having *bene esse*. Although the form is *esse* and *bene esse* in itself, the composite can fulfill the latter, i.e. achieve its end, to a greater or lesser degree.

Bonaventure then brings in a quote from Aristotle which clarifies the way in which evil exists: “[A]s the Philosopher says, ‘some things are *beings*, and some are *of beings*.’”<sup>590</sup> An evil in a soul is *of* the soul, and in this sense, i.e. insofar as the soul exists, so then does the evil. Evil indeed is not a being in itself – there is no thing which simply is evil. As Bonaventure says, “although privations may be said of beings, [the privations] nevertheless are not called beings.”<sup>591</sup> Evil is not a species or genus, but it is something which we attribute to things, very much in the way which we attribute goodness to things.<sup>592</sup> When we say something is good, we refer to the quality of a particular substance; we are not making a statement about the existence of the substance (except in the very general sense that it has to exist for one to predicate goodness of it). Likewise do we attribute evil to things: only as a quality. If we look at the above reference to Aristotle in its full context, we see even

---

<sup>589</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 34, a. 2, q. 3, p. 815a. “Si autem aliquando dicatur ipsa res mala sive peccator nihil esse, hoc dicitur quantum ad bene esse, quod quidem est esse ordinatum.”

<sup>590</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 34, a. 2, q. 3, p. 815b. “Ad illud quod obiicitur, quod malum est in aliquo, ergo est; dicendum, quod illud non sequitur; nam, sicut dicit Philosophus, ‘quaedam sunt entia, quaedam sunt entium; et quamvis privationes possint dici entium, non tamen dicuntur entia.’” *Meta.* VII.1.

<sup>591</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 34, a. 2, q. 3, p. 815b. “... et quamvis privationes possint dici entium, non tamen dicuntur entia.”

<sup>592</sup> Although Bonaventure does not reference the discussion of evils in the *Categories*, it would seem to fit in well with his idea of good and evil being predicated of things – and indeed of *every* being insofar as everything can be described as either good or evil (or perhaps both in different respects). Aristotle compares different types of contraries, stating that contraries like white and black are in the same genus (i.e. color), while other contraries, like justice and injustice are in opposing genera (i.e. virtue and vice, respectively), but good and bad are in no genus – themselves being the genera of particular things. *Cat.* II.3 14a15-25.



more clearly this idea of evil being designated of things as a quality: “[W]hen we describe the quality of a particular thing we say that it is ‘good or bad’...”<sup>593</sup>

Here, Bonaventure is redefining the Augustinian notion that evil is a privation of being. Properly speaking, saying that a composite possesses an evil is not to say that something is missing from the composite’s being – because the composite still exists and still has the natural form – but only that something is missing from the composite’s *bene esse*. In Bonaventure’s account, one would not say a horse is less of a horse, or exists less,<sup>594</sup> because it is, e.g., deaf, but only that it is not as “good” a horse as the horse which is not deaf – this is a question of the quality which we attribute, or do not attribute, to the horse, rather than a question of the horse’s existence.<sup>595</sup>

Bonaventure gives an illustration of the above understanding of how evil exists insofar as it is *of beings* in a question concerning the fall of angels. He first makes a distinction between a natural love and an elected love. The former is what a creature should fulfill by its nature, e.g., angels have a natural love for whatever is their final cause and therefore they should fulfill it. Designating precisely what it means for an angel to fulfill its end is perhaps too difficult of a task, so we can instead apply this notion of natural love, as Bonaventure does, to animals.<sup>596</sup> Animals have a natural love directed towards whatever is necessary to fulfill their proper end, e.g., a horse loves to canter or it loves its foals. If these things are not fulfilled, it lacks *bene esse* – e.g., it becomes sick and cannot canter, it has no foals, etc. These are all evils which prevent it from fulfilling what it is to be a horse. The latter type of love (i.e. elected love) occurs only in creatures which have an intellect and can freely choose what to love. Thus, while all horses love their foals and love to canter, angels – or human beings – can actively choose to act against their nature and pursue something else.<sup>597</sup>

<sup>593</sup> *Meta.* VII.1 1028a15-17.

<sup>594</sup> The main point is that Augustine does not have a distinction between the potency to be a man, which is necessary for an individual man to exist, and fulfilling this potency, i.e. achieving one’s final end. Thereby, Augustine cannot say that something fails to fulfill its final end without also saying that it exists less.

<sup>595</sup> Aquinas expresses both a position similar to Augustine’s and to Bonaventure’s. He does state, unlike Bonaventure who puts a caveat on this position, that evil is a privation: “Evil is distant both from simple being and from simple ‘not-being,’ because it is neither a habit nor a pure negation, but a privation.” However, he then expresses a position similar to Bonaventure, likewise using Aristotle: “As the Philosopher says (*Metaph.* v, text 14), being is twofold. In one way it is considered as signifying the entity of a thing, as divisible by the ten ‘predicaments’; and in that sense it is convertible with thing, and thus no privation is a being, and neither therefore is evil a being.” *ST I* q. 48, a. 2.

<sup>596</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 6, a. 1, q. 2, p. 163b.

<sup>597</sup> Indeed, the main topic of discussion which interests Bonaventure is evil which is chosen. However, this seems to leave out evils which occur in nature, e.g., sickness. On this point, Bonaventure takes the position that in nature there is also a will, but unlike the human will, the will in nature never fails to choose what is best: “nature is a determined agent, whence it always intends what is best, it operates according to laws inherent in itself from God. When, if something occurs in nature which is evil, this is according to intention; but it is not from a deliberative will; for this [i.e. the deliberative will] does not always desire what is best.” *In Sent.* II, d. 34, a.2, q. 1, p. 809. This is to say that what appears to us as evils caused by nature are really always done for the best of the whole of nature.

Bonaventure – perhaps surprisingly for a discussion of angels – has been drawing this notion of elected/natural love from a passage in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, where Aristotle discusses the type of action in which a character should engage in order to make the tragedy most effective. Aristotle rejects the idea that this action may occur between enemies or neutrals, because there is nothing “terrible or pitiable” about that – e.g., if someone kills their enemy, this is understandable.<sup>598</sup> The actions that are terrible or pitiable are ones that occur between familial relations. These are relations between people which *naturally* are supposed to be of love, such as a mother towards her children, or to use the example which Bonaventure takes from Aristotle: Medea. Medea, in choosing to kill her children does not exist less, but fails to fulfill what it is to be a good human being – she has *esse*, insofar as she still has the form of humanity, but not *bene esse*, insofar as she is not a good human.<sup>599</sup>

Now to turn to the question of how God can be understood to cause evil: *prima facie*, if God is himself good, it seems absurd to say that he can cause evil in any way, since the opposite of good is evil. Bonaventure again makes a distinction. He first of all affirms that good and evil are opposites, but clarifies that the sense in which good is said to be an opposite of evil is only with reference to goods which are good by participation in a particular form. Here we should recall our discussion in chapter 4, where Bonaventure asserted that forms are each good, and by participation in the forms, sensible things are good – but with the caveat that the forms, of course, are not goodness itself: God is goodness itself. He draws on that same distinction here. When evil is opposed to good, the “good” means *goods*, i.e. things which are good, things which have the *quality* of being good, which is only said with reference to the kind of things that they are. “Good horse” is opposed to “bad horse”; “good soul” is opposed to “evil soul” – this is all said with reference to *what* they are, i.e. their participation in their form. Goodness itself, however, has no opposite: “[B]ut when we are talking about the highest good, it is understood to be good as good *per essentiam*, which alone is the highest good and has nothing opposite to it.”<sup>600</sup> If we are talking about good things, i.e. things which have the quality of being good, they admit of opposites – but if we are talking about the good in itself, which does not have goodness as a quality but as its essence, evil is not opposed to it.<sup>601</sup> One

<sup>598</sup> *Poet.* 14. 1055315-20.

<sup>599</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 34, a.2, q. 1, p. 809a. Bonaventure’s examples are aiming at the ends of enjoying luxury to excess or vainglory. However, even in choosing a love which is contrary to nature, a free agent nevertheless always chooses an object of love which is good – i.e. the agent intends some end, although the wrong one. Medea chooses the pleasure she finds in revenge over her love of her children. Echoing the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bonaventure writes: “nothing is desired by the will unless it is understood as good *simpliciter* or good in itself.” “...nihil appetitur a voluntate nisi sub ratione boni simpliciter vel boni sibi.”

<sup>600</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 34, a. 2, q. 1, p. 811b. “... cum vero infertur de summo bono, accipitur ibi bonum pro bono *per essentiam*, quod solum est summe bonum, et illi nihil opponitur.”

<sup>601</sup> This sounds very similar to Dionysius insofar as Dionysius’ God is designated precisely as a good beyond being – categories of being then would not apply to him. Augustine, however, avoids this

cannot even really say that “God is good” because we would have to ask, a good what? – since good is only *of* something. God is not a good “something,” of which a bad “something” is its opposite. God is simply goodness.<sup>602</sup>

Here, Bonaventure is asserting that all *composition* is caused by God, i.e. not only the composition of forms, but also the presence of evil within things: “It is to be conceded *simpliciter*, that all composition is from God inasmuch as it is a composition, just as all action and conservation [comes from him].”<sup>603</sup> Moreover, one could easily remark how different of a solution this is to Augustine’s. For Augustine, God is a principle of being/goodness and thereby causes being and goodness – and does not cause evil insofar as evil does not exist. For Bonaventure, however, the forms take over this role of causing being and goodness in sensible things, while God (as in Dionysius), who is himself above the forms, is free to cause the “being” of evil, insofar as evil’s “being” is nothing more than its “being in” a composite.

To illustrate the above notion concerning the way in which evil exists in composites, Bonaventure addresses an example from the Bible: an idol. Bonaventure provides two positions in opposition to his own: the first position is that of Richard of St. Victor, which without qualification asserts that the entire composite is from God. This position implies, due to its lack of nuance, that not only is the ordering of the evil component in the composite from God, but the evil component itself, i.e. to state so simply, as Richard does, that the composite is caused by God would mean that the evil component itself is caused by God, just as any other component (e.g., form and matter) is caused by God. Richard, of course, would certainly not want to endorse such a result – but here Bonaventure is targeting Richard’s account as being overly simplistic and thereby leading to this absurd position.

To introduce a second position, Bonaventure brings in a passage from First Corinthians, in which Paul writes that “we know that idols are nothing.”<sup>604</sup> Bonaventure then quotes the *Glossa*, summarizing Augustine, who writes: “An idol also was not made by the Word;— it has indeed a sort of human form, but man himself was made by the Word;— for the form of man in an idol was not made by the Word, and it is written, ‘We know that an idol is nothing.’”<sup>605</sup> This is easy for Augustine to assert since he considers evil to be nothing. The idol is evil, and so it is nothing, and God

---

issue of having two competing first principles (i.e. Good and Evil) not by placing goodness above being but by equating goodness with being and then denying to evil things not only goodness but also being.

<sup>602</sup> This is a fairly standard position. Moreover, as Bonaventure mentions, this position is necessary to argue against the Manicheans, i.e. because while there is a good in itself, there is no evil in itself.

<sup>603</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 37, a. 1, q. 3, p. 867b. “... concedendum est simpliciter, quod omnis compositio sit a Deo, secundum quod compositio, sicut et omnis actio et conservatio.” All action is attributed to God: *In Sent.* II, d. 37, a. 1, q. 1, pp. 862–3. All things are conserved by God: *In Sent.* II, d. 37, a. 1, q. 1, pp. 865–66.

<sup>604</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 37, a. 1, q. 3, p. 867a. “Scimus, quia idolum nihil est; Glossa: ‘Materiam idoli Deus formavit, sed stultitia hominem formam dedit.’ Et post: ‘Quaecumque sunt in creaturis, facta sunt per Verbum; sed forma hominis in idolo non est facta per Verbum, sicut peccatum non est factum per Verbum.’”

<sup>605</sup> *Tr. in Ioann.* tr. 1, n. 3. Augustine quotes the same line from Corinthians.

did not cause it. Bonaventure summarizes Augustine's position: "It seems then that the composition of such forms with such matter is not from God."<sup>606</sup>

According to Bonaventure, these two positions paint the picture as being too black and white: Augustine in the sense that evil is not in any way caused by God and Richard in the sense that (he at least implies) evil itself is caused God. Bonaventure rather takes the subtler route in saying that the evil as an *entium* (albeit not an *ens*) is caused by God. Bonaventure first of all clarifies: the idol "names some artifact containing in itself some God or divinity."<sup>607</sup> This is to say, there is a form attributed to the idol of some god. He then makes a distinction: "[A]nd according to this, its composition can be understood in two ways, that is (1) the form of the art to the matter and (2) the divinity to the art."<sup>608</sup> In the first way "the composition is on the part of the thing, but the second is only according to a value attributed to it by the idolator."<sup>609</sup> With regard to the second composition, i.e. while the idolator attributes to the statue of, e.g., Athena, the *presence* of Athena, in reality, Athena is not there. With regard to the first composition, e.g., the form of Athena in the bronze, however, it is absurd to assert that the idol itself is nothing: "[W]ith regard to the first composition, the composition of the idol is *something*."<sup>610</sup> Moreover, Bonaventure considers, "it must be conceded that the conjunction of such a form (i.e. of the divinity) with such matter, since it is a real thing, is from God."<sup>611</sup>

The value then attributed to the idol, i.e. the presence of the divinity (such as Athena), considered in itself, is not from God because it is nothing but "a defect of cognition and of faith"<sup>612</sup> – this defect does not come from God but from the human being who says that Athena is in the statue. Nevertheless, "this does not deny that the *composition* of this form (i.e. of the divinity) with this matter absolutely is from God."<sup>613</sup> God does not cause the false belief in the false god being in the statue, but

<sup>606</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 37, a. 1, q. 3, p. 867a. "Videtur ergo, quod compositio talis formae cum tali materia non sit a Deo."

<sup>607</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 37, a. 1, q. 3, p. 867. "... dicendum, quod idolum, secundum quod huiusmodi, nominat aliquod artificiatum, continens in se aliquid numinis vel divinitatis...."

<sup>608</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 37, a. 1, q. 3, p. 868b. "... et secundum hoc dupliciter intelligibitur ibi compositio, videlicet formae artis ad materiam, et divinitatis ad artificium...."

<sup>609</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 37, a. 1, q. 3, p. 868b. [continued from previous note] "... et prima quidem compositio est ex parte rei, secunda vero est solummodo secundum aestimationem idolatrae."

<sup>610</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 37, a. 1, q. 3, p. 868b. [continued from previous note] "Quantum ad primam compositionem idolum aliquid est...."

<sup>611</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 37, a. 1, q. 3, p. 868b. "Concedo ergo, quod coniunctio talis formae cum hac materia, cum sit realiter ens, quod a Deo est." Moreover, Bonaventure says that even if we consider the situation from the position of the idolator, the value that the idolator places on the idol, i.e. the form of the divinity, is itself good in a certain sense, i.e. insofar as it is an instance of the soul in act.

<sup>612</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 37, a. 1, q. 3, p. 868b. "Similiter ordinatio illius formae artificialis ad continentiam divinitatis, illa quidem potius est deordinatio quam aliqua positio; et haec quidem a Deo non est, sed a defectu cognitionis et fidei."

<sup>613</sup> *In Sent.* II, d. 37, a. 1, q. 3, p. 868a. "Cum ergo dicitur, quod forma idoli in tali materia non sit a Deo, non negatur compositio huius formae cum hac materia absolute esse a Deo."

he causes the statue to have the form of the god, i.e. he causes the *composition* of the form of Athena in the statue.

Similar to how Bonaventure used Medea to illustrate his notion of elected love, we can illustrate the above point with another example from theater: Verdi's *Don Carlo* – a choice of which both Bonaventure and Aristotle should approve since, like *Medea*, it concerns familial relations. Philip and his son, Carlo, are mutually jealous of each other and at the end of the opera Philip decides to kill Carlo. This objectively is a bad thing to do, and it constitutes an evil “component” of Philip, i.e. in this respect, we can call him evil. Were we to analyze the character of Philip on a purely Augustinian account of evil, it would be difficult to see how his character would be effective dramatically – or how theater at all would be effective. First of all, as with the case of the idol, the audience would (or should) see any flawed character as simply lacking something, i.e. being “nothing” as Augustine says the idol is nothing – we should just be repulsed by the flaw which is itself a lack of being. Then again, if we applied Richard's account to the character (or, at least, the implications of it brought out by Bonaventure), it would make the evil qua evil in Philip that which moves the audience. Yet this is not quite right, either, because the audience knows this is a failing – they are responding to, care about, and sympathize with the character, not his flaw qua flaw. In both accounts, there is no emphasis on the manner in which the evil is composed in the composite. This theater example illustrates that it is the *composition* of the evil in the whole which is key. For the actor (or for the playwright or composer), the challenge is to *compose* the evil within the character in such a way as to make the character sympathetic – just as for God, the task is to compose evils within his creation to render his creation good.<sup>614</sup>

This is evidenced by the fact that an audience is quite capable of discerning one actor performing a part better than another. For example, a common way of portraying Philip is as a character who is somewhat pathetic and externally pressured by other characters into his evil feelings and actions – e.g., when the Grand Inquisitor threatens Philip, this Philip's response is to cower and say fearfully and resentfully, “so the crown has to bow to the altar.” This portrayal, however, ultimately never works, and the “famous” Philips in history (e.g., Nicolai Ghiaurov) have always been ones which have portrayed Philip as strong, contemplative, and, to a certain extent proud, thereby not excusing him, but rendering him all the more responsible for his own evil – e.g., when the Grand Inquisitor threatens Philip, this Philip remains standing upright and says the same lines in defiance. Despite this Philip being to a great extent *more* responsible for his own evil, this is simply the composition of the evil in the whole which works, and which moves the audience. Indeed, on both Richard's and Augustine's accounts, it would be difficult to see how an audience

---

<sup>614</sup> Perhaps Bonaventure's account would relieve some of Augustine's anxiety about enjoying poetry and theater, e.g., sympathizing with Dido. *Conf.* I.xi (17), Vi.vii (11-12), *Civ.* IX.4.

would be able to discern these differences. On Augustine's account, the audience should be repulsed by any actor playing any evil character; on Richard's account, since the flaw portrayed would be the same, yet again, the actor would not matter. Yet while neither Richard's nor Augustine's accounts explain how we experience the character, Bonaventure's, in stressing the composition being key, does just this. Bonaventure's understanding of evil explains why two actors can portray the same character, who has the same flaw, and in one case the character is sympathetic and in the other he isn't. It is clear, the effectiveness of the actor hinges upon the way in which he orders the evil within the character – namely, the composition as a whole.

## 5. CONCLUSION

My aim in this chapter was to address Bonaventure's understanding of physical composites, which entailed targeting four key problems: individuation of sensible things, composition of sensible things, causation among sensible things, and evil among sensible things. Now, we can take a step back and see the advantages of Bonaventure's solutions to each of these problems. For the problem of evil, we have a neat synthesis of Dionysius and Aristotle to the effect that Bonaventure explains not only the ontological status of evil, and where it comes from, but also how we psychologically experience evils among composite things. For the question of causation among sensible things, we see again Bonaventure's Aristotelianism, but here used in such a way as to anticipate, somewhat more clearly than Aristotle does, modern theories of evolution. For the topic of the composition of sensible things, we see Bonaventure provide an account of a plurality of substantial forms which, as I have shown, is far from being an embarrassing position (as it is often held to be), precisely because it necessarily results from his understanding of forms as universal definitions and his broader realism. With respect to Bonaventure's understanding of the form of light, as the substantial form of all bodies, we also found in place of what is often taken as a poetic mysticism a detailed and complex physics of light – his interest extending to considerations not only of corporeity but also of luminosity and visibility. Finally, with respect to the question of individuation, we very clearly saw Bonaventure respond not only to the account of individuation given by Aquinas, but also to have anticipated the position of Duns Scotus – in turn, anticipating criticisms of Scotus' position which Ockham similarly makes. Indeed, the overarching observation one should make with regard to Bonaventure's solutions here – and indeed this is something which we have seen in the previous chapters as well – is his ability both to take from past philosophers, whether this be Aristotle or the Neoplatonists, as well as to anticipate future solutions and objections, particularly of later Franciscans, and to incorporate all of these considerations into his own thought.



## CONCLUSION

To begin this conclusion with a question which I'm certain has been in the reader's mind until this point, and this is now the historical question as to which philosophical school or tradition Bonaventure belongs – or better, here we need to give a response to that usual divide between Augustinians and Aristotelians, between Bonaventure and Aquinas. Attempts have been made – in the early twentieth century, as we have seen, by scholars such as Gilson – to characterize Bonaventure as a traditional Augustinian, defender of Christian Neoplatonism. Thereby, we should place Bonaventure into a category along with Alexander of Hales, John de la Rochelle, and the like. Others, such as John Francis Quinn, have attempted to tie Bonaventure rather more closely to his contemporary, Thomas Aquinas, admitting that Bonaventure is a philosopher of a different sort than his Franciscan predecessors and, rather, very much a man of his times – thereby rightly placed alongside Aquinas. Here, it is fair to say that van Steenberghe would be in agreement with this latter characterization, particularly with regard to Bonaventure's use of Aristotle which van Steenberghe portrays as being no different than the somewhat liberal, or rather "eclectic," use of Aristotle found in Aquinas and other scholastics.

Here, I would like to introduce a further option. There is of course a crucial break which Bonaventure makes with the Neoplatonic tradition, namely, that decidedly non-Neoplatonic – but Aristotelian – position that forms are not separate from sensible things. The strength of this position in Bonaventure quite obviously rules out the first characterization, which portrays Bonaventure purely as a defender of the traditional Augustinian and Neoplatonic sources. However, I don't want to place Bonaventure in the same category as Aquinas, either. My reasoning for this is that (a) when it comes to his understanding of God, Bonaventure is tied to the Neoplatonists, albeit perhaps not Augustine (as I will discuss momentarily), in a way Aquinas is not; and (b) Bonaventure's way of reading Aristotle, and his resulting understanding of forms, expresses a deep dissatisfaction with other medieval readings of "Aristotelian" realism.

Bonaventure is a realist, but, just as he is an Aristotelian of a much different kind than his contemporaries, he is likewise a realist of a much different kind than his contemporaries. His dissatisfaction with the "realist" and "conceptualist" notions of his contemporaries was made abundantly clear in the arguments we discussed in chapter 5. Indeed, much of Bonaventure's notion of form develops as a result of addressing these issues with his contemporaries. Moreover, the issues which he had are extremely similar to issues raised by later Franciscans, who likewise take up the task of critiquing these alternative accounts of universals – and taking such



critiques as starting points for developing their own positions. These positions, however, are clearly very different from Bonaventure's.

Accordingly, I rather see it more fitting to place Bonaventure into a school of his own, along with his students, John Peckham and Matthew of Aquasparta. It is true, on the one hand, that Bonaventure shares in common with the Neoplatonists the position that forms exist; with his contemporaries, such as Aquinas, he shares the interest in utilizing the philosophy of Aristotle to explain what these forms are and how they exist; and again with the later Franciscans, he shares a deep skepticism of the traditional ways of explaining the existence of these forms, Aristotelian and Neoplatonic alike. Yet, on the other, Bonaventure belongs to none of these schools: his interest in Aristotle prevents us from calling him a traditional Neoplatonist/Augustinian; the distinctiveness of his reading of Aristotle prevents us from placing him in a category with any of the alternative readings of Aristotle in the scholastic period; and his strong commitment to the position that forms primarily exist prevents him from being placed along with the Franciscans who came after him.

As I have emphasized above, Bonaventure's turn to Aristotle – and precisely the distinctive way in which he reads Aristotle – expresses to a great extent his dissatisfaction with the solutions to the problems of universal forms found in his predecessors and contemporaries. Thus, we return to our perennial question of Bonaventure's relationship to Aristotle. As I hope to have made clear in the preceding chapters, I am not defending the position that Bonaventure felt any kind of personal affection for Aristotle, or a kind of call to defend him from interpretations other than his own – the kind of zeal we rather see in Aquinas' dedication to commenting on Aristotle's corpus and defending precisely his own reading of Aristotle. Bonaventure showed no interest in doing this – no interest in defending the man, or his philosophy against the evils of alternative readings. He admittedly states that Aristotle is unclear on certain issues. However, and this is the point of emphasis, even when it comes to issues like the eternity of the world, Bonaventure never admits that Aristotle is in contradiction with Bonaventure's own positions. Thus, while he does not see it as a goal to defend Aristotle, when the pressures of politics are removed, Bonaventure views Aristotle very much as an authority and does not want to be in contradiction with him. To make a more forceful assertion, I do think that it is quite clear that Bonaventure's appropriation of Aristotle's corpus is done with great enthusiasm – particularly when it comes to the question of the ontological status of the forms. When it comes, on the other hand, to the understanding of God's causal efficacy, Bonaventure turns rather to Dionysius – and understandably so, insofar as Aristotle does not provide enough discussion of God to resolve the questions which are being asked of Bonaventure. But when it comes to the question of the forms and their presence in physical things, *the* source for Bonaventure is Aristotle.

What, then, of the question of Augustine's influence on Bonaventure? On a number of issues we have seen Bonaventure bring in Augustine, e.g., exemplarism, and

(nominally, at least) seminal reasons, and there are also a number of issues which we have not examined where Augustine would be a key influence on Bonaventure, e.g., illumination. However, we also have seen Bonaventure quite explicitly part ways with Augustine on a number of points. This is why I put the caveat about Augustine on my claim that Bonaventure is tied to the earlier Neoplatonic sources. In a number of places, we saw – perhaps surprisingly – that Aquinas retained an Augustinian position which Bonaventure relinquished or even explicitly rejected. The most obvious, and important, example is the notion of God. While Aquinas retains that very Augustinian equation of being and goodness as applied to God, Bonaventure rejects such a notion and applies the being=goodness equation rather to the forms, turning instead to Dionysius' God beyond being as the cause of the forms. In a similar vein, while Aquinas' position on the ontological status of evil is quite similar to Augustine's, Bonaventure explicitly rejects Augustine's position in favor of his own which he bases on Aristotle.

Highlighting how Bonaventure parts ways with Augustine – especially when he explicitly rejects a position of Augustine, as with the notion of evil – indeed further undermines the usual division of medieval thinkers into the categories of Augustinians vs. Aristotelians, in which “Augustinians” is supposed to include anyone influenced not only by Augustine but also by other Christian Neoplatonic thinkers, such as Dionysius. Indeed, while Augustine and Dionysius share certain positions, such as a notion of exemplar causation, they differ on certain foundational issues, such as their notion of being and its relation to God – thereby it is plainly odd to put them so quickly in a category together, as if being influenced by Dionysius means being in accordance also with Augustine, or vice versa. Thus, when Bonaventure rejects certain Augustinian metaphysical positions, he is able to turn to an *alternative* position, e.g., that of Dionysius.

To return now to what I think is the key import of this book, we can make a few comments about the understanding of forms in Bonaventure's thought which we have presented. Here, I wish to stress that the foundational insight which Bonaventure provides regarding the forms is the claim that only the forms exist. My reasoning for singling out this one point is twofold. From our discussion of Bonaventure in the three preceding chapters, it is clear that this position is the foundation of Bonaventure's entire ontology. From this basic position, all of his others flow – that the presence of the forms qua operator (i.e. as a seminal reason) in this or that sensible thing is a contingent, not necessary aspect of forms; that sensible things do not exist but only have a likewise contingent existence, etc. Moreover, as we have seen, many of the possible objections to Bonaventure's positions – such as Ockham's objection to Platonic forms about the form being separate from itself, or Plato's own sail problem – may be responded to by emphasizing this foundational claim: only the forms exist, and so there is nothing for the forms to be separate from, nor anything for the form to be divided amongst. Thus, this point is central to

Bonaventure's understanding of the forms and their place in the wider ontological structure of God and creation.

My second reason for singling out this point is that I think this is an insight which is beneficial not only taken in itself, but also for the task of reading and interpreting ancient philosophy, the way in which it was received by medieval philosophers, and understanding better the relationship between these two philosophical eras. This is to say, this book – whose focus is mainly the notion of form provided by Bonaventure – should not serve as useful solely for those interested in Bonaventure or medieval philosophy in general. First of all, as I've highlighted above, insofar as the understanding of forms which we find in Bonaventure is very clearly based on his interpretation of Aristotelian metaphysics and physics, he is simultaneously providing us with just that: an interpretation of Aristotle. Moreover, it is an interpretation which, as I have tried to show, is not only reasonably substantiated by the texts but also coherent taken as a whole. In this sense, then, Bonaventure is not very far from many contemporary scholars of ancient philosophy. Granted his own goals are different from ours, insofar as he is looking to develop his own philosophy, whereas we want only to understand Aristotle's, nevertheless examining his texts gives us better insight into how we also might approach Aristotle. As I mentioned in the introduction, while we have made good use of other medieval interpretations of Aristotle, we have yet to utilize Bonaventure's interpretation.

In chapter 4, I highlighted what I considered to be the benefits of Bonaventure's reading of Aristotle. The main point there was that Bonaventure's reading doesn't reduce Aristotle's realist metaphysics to the realist metaphysics of Aquinas in which the only existence which a form has is a contingent and individualized existence within the sensible composite – an account which, as we saw, ended up as unsatisfactory in its attempt to ground knowledge (i.e. of a universal) in such a form. Indeed, the standard way of reading Aristotle makes his account of forms similar to Aquinas' – and thereby susceptible to similar objections made to Aquinas, as we find, e.g., in Ockham, or, as we have seen, in Bonaventure himself. While contemporary scholarship on Aristotle has examined alternatives to this reading of Aristotle's forms, maintaining instead that Aristotle's forms are indeed universal or that they are both universal and individual, etc., a reading along the lines of Bonaventure's has yet to be offered in contemporary debates. Indeed, the fact that Bonaventure's thought is an untapped resource for scholars of Aristotle extends further than the topic of forms, to the other ways in which Bonaventure utilized Aristotle's texts – ways which might at first have sounded idiosyncratic but ended up providing a convincing position, as we saw with Bonaventure's interpretation of God's will or the ontological status of evil in Aristotle.

Moreover, just as an examination of Bonaventure's philosophy has brought into question our standard divisions of medieval thinkers – Augustinian vs. Aristotelian, or Augustinian vs. Neoplatonic – it also to a great extent undermines yet

another way of categorizing philosophers: the division between Platonism and Aristotelianism. The indeed overly simplistic way of separating out the Platonic from the Aristotelian is often based on the position that, for the Platonists, forms are separate and ontologically independent, and that, for the Aristotelians, forms are inseparable and ontologically dependent. Yet, as we have seen, Bonaventure quite clearly breaks yet another mold here, insofar as his understanding of forms, as inseparable yet ontologically independent, would fit into neither of these categories. Thus, on this point, a study of Bonaventure's metaphysical thought paints a very different picture not only of what Aristotle himself might have meant with his theory of the forms, but also a very different picture of what Aristotelianism and Platonism should mean to contemporary scholars – and indeed meant during the scholastic period.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRIMARY SOURCES

- Alexander of Hales. *Doctoris irrefragabilis Alexandri de Hales Ordinis minorum Summa theologica*, 4 vols. Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1924-48.
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Harris Rackham. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926.
- . *Politics*. Translated by Harris Rackham. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932.
- . *Metaphysics, Vols. I-II*. Translated by Hugh Tredennick and G. Cyril Armstrong. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933-1935.
- . *Physics, Vols. I-II*. Translated by Philip H. Wicksteed and Francis Macdonald Cornford. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934-1957.
- . *Athenian Constitution. Eudemian Ethics. Virtues and Vices*. Translated by Harris Rackham. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935.
- . *Minor Works*. Translated by W. S. Hett. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936.
- . *Parts of Animals. Movement of Animals. Progression of Animals*. Translated by A. L. Peck and E. S. Forster. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937.
- . *Categories. On Interpretation. Prior Analytics*. Translated by Harold P. Cooke and Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938.
- . *On the Heavens*. Translated by W. K. C. Guthrie. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939.
- . *Generation of Animals*. Translated by A. L. Peck. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942.
- . *Meteorologica*. Translated by H. D. P. Lee. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952.
- . *On Sophistical Refutations. On Coming-to-Be and Passing Away. On the Cosmos*. Translated by E. S. Forster and David J Furley. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955.
- . *On the Soul*. Translated by W. S. Hett. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957.
- . *Posterior Analytics*. Translated by Hugh Tredennick and E. S. Forster. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960.
- . *History of Animals, Vol. I*. Translated by A. L. Peck. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965.

- . *History of Animals, Vol. II*. Translated by A. L. Peck. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970.
- . *History of Animals, Vol. III*. Translated by D. M. Balme. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- . *Poetics*. Translated by Stephen Halliwell, W. Hamilton Fyfe, Doreen C. Innes, and W. Rhys Roberts. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- . *Art of Rhetoric*. Edited by Gisela Striker. Translated by J. H. Freese. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020.
- Augustine. *De Diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*. In *S. Aurelii Augustini Opera Omnia: Patrologiae Latinae Elenchus*. Paris: Migne, 1844-1855.
- . *In evangelium Ioannis tractatus S. Aurelii Augustini Opera Omnia: Patrologiae Latinae*. Paris: Migne, 1844-1855.
- . *De Genesi ad litteram*. In *Sancti Aureli Augustini De genesi ad litteram libri duodecim, eiusdem libri capitula, de genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber, locutionum in heptateuchum libri septem*. Vindobonae: F. Tempsky, 1894.
- . *Select Letters*. Translated by James Houston Baxter. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930.
- . *The City of God Vols. 1-7*. Translated by George E. McCracken, et al. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1957-2008.
- . *On the Trinity*. Translated by Stephen McKenna. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- . *Confessions, Vols. 1-2*. Translated by Carolyn J.-B. Hammond. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014-2016.
- Boethius. *In Porphyrius Commentariorum*. In *Opera Omnia Manlii Severini Boetii*. Paris: Migne 1891.
- Bonaventure. *Opera Omnia*. Rome: Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventura, 1882-1902.
- . *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*. Translated by Zachary Hayes. Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1996.
- . *Itinerarium Mentis In Deum*. Translated by Philotheus Boehner and Zachary Hayes. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002.
- . *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*. Translated by Zachary Hayes. Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1992.
- . *Collationes on the Hexaemeron*. Translated by Jay M. Hammond. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2018.
- Dionysius the Areopagite. *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*. Translated by Rev. John Parker. Oxford: James Parker and Co., 1897.
- Duns Scotus. *Ioannis Duns Scoti Opera Omnia VII*. Civitas Vaticana: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1973.
- Marinus. *The Life of Proclus, or, Concerning Happiness: Being the Biographical Account of an Ancient Greek Philosopher Who Was Innately Loved by the Gods*.

- Translated by Kenneth S. Guthrie and David R. Fideler. Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1986.
- Marius Victorinus. *Liber de Generatione Verbi*. In *Patrologia Latina*. Paris: Migne, 1844.
- Peckham, John. *Quaestiones Disputatae*. Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae Ad Claras Aquas, 2002.
- Plato. *Theaetetus. Sophist*. Translated by Harold North Fowler. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921.
- . *Cratylus. Parmenides. Greater Hippias. Lesser Hippias*. Translated by Harold North Fowler. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926.
- . *Timaeus. Critias. Cleitophon. Menexenus. Epistles*. Translated by Robert Gregg Bury. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929.
- . *Republic, Vol. I*. Translated by Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- . *Republic, Vol. II*. Translated by Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- . *Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo*. Translated by Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017.
- Plotinus. *Enneads, Vols 1-7*. Translated by A.H. Armstrong. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966-1988.
- Proclus. *Oracles chaldaïques: Avec un choix de commentaires anciens: Psellus – Proclus – Michel Italicus*. Paris: Belles Lettres, 1971.
- . *The Elements of Theology*. Translated by E. R. Dodds. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- . *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus. Vol. 1. Book 1, Proclus on the Socratic State and Atlantis*. Translated by Harold Tarrant. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- . *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus. Vol. 4. Book 3, Part 2, Proclus on the World Soul*. Translated by Dirk Baltzly. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- . *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus. Vol. 6. Book 5, Proclus on the Gods of Generation and the Creation of Humans*. Edited by Harold Tarrant. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- . *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*. Translated by Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.
- Thomas Aquinas. *Summae de Veritate Catholicae Fidei Contra Gentiles: Quae Supersunt Ex Codice Autographo Qui in Bibliotheca Vaticana Adservatur*. Rome: Typographia Polyglotta, 1878.
- . *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia: Iussu Impensaue, Leonis XIII. P.M. Edita*. Rome: Ex Typographia Polyglotta S.C. De Propaganda Fide, 1882.



- . *De Principiis Naturae*. Edited by John J. Pauson. Fribourg-Louvain: Société Philosophique, 1950.
- . *On the Power of God: Quaestiones disputate de potentia dei*. Translated by the English Dominican Fathers. Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1952.
- . *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Translated by John P. Rowan. Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1961.
- . *On Being and Essence*. Translated and edited by Armand Maurer. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1968.
- . *An Exposition of the "On the Hebdomads" of Boethius*. Translated by Janice L. Schultz and Edward A. Aynan. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001.
- . *Summa Contra Gentiles (Book One: God)*. Translated by Anton C. Pegis, F.R.S.C. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005.
- . *Summa Theologiae Vol. 2*. Translated by Timothy McDermott, O.P. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- . *Summa Theologiae Vol. 8*. Translated by Thomas Gilby, O.P. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- William of Ockham. *Guillelmi de Ockham Opera Philosophica et Logica: Opera Theologica II: Distinctiones II-III*. Edited by Stephanus Brown, O.F.M. St. Bonaventure, NY: Insituti Franciscani Universitatis S. Bonaventurae, 1970.
- . *Quodlibetal Questions: Quodlibets 1-7*. Translated by Alfred J. Freddoso and Francis E. Kelley. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

## SECONDARY SOURCES

- Aertsen, Jan. *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas*. Leiden: Brill, 1996.
- . *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor to Francisco Suarez*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.
- Agnoli, Francesco. *Roberto Grossatesta: La filosofia della luce*. Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 2007.
- Benevich, Fedor. "The Essence-Existence Distinction: Four Elements of the Post-Avicennian Metaphysical Dispute (11–13th Centuries)." *Oriens: Zeitschrift der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Orientforschung* 45, nos. 3–4 (2017): 203–58.
- Bertolacci, Amos. "On the Latin Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics before Albertus Magnus: An Attempt at Periodization." In *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics, 197–223*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011.
- . "The Distinction of Essence and Existence in Avicenna's Metaphysics: The Text and Its Context." In *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas*, edited by F. Opwis, D. C. Reisman, 257–288. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

- . “Essence and Existence” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam – Three*. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Bettoni, Efrem. *S. Bonaventura da Bagnoregio: gli aspetti filosofici del suo pensiero*. Milan: Biblioteca Francese Provinciale, 1973.
- Bieniak, Magdalena. *The Soul-Body Problem at Paris Ca. 1200-1250: Hugh of St. Cher and his Contemporaries*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010.
- Boehner, Philotheus. *The History of the Franciscan School*. St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1943.
- Bonanse, Bernardino. “The Question of an Eternal World in the Teaching of St. Bonaventure.” *Franciscan Studies* 34 (1974): 7–33.
- Bos, Abraham P. “Aristotle’s Doctrine of the Instrumental Body of the Soul.” *Philosophia Reformata* 64 (1999): 37–51.
- Bougerol, Jacques-Guy. *Introduction a l’étude de Saint Bonaventure*. Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1961.
- . “Dossier Pour l’étude Des Rapports Entre Saint Bonaventure et Aristote.” *Archives d’histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire Du Moyen Age* 40 (1973): 135–222.
- Bourke, Vernon J. “From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again. A Journey in Final Causality, Species, and Evolution by Etienne Gilson.” *The Modern Schoolman* 63, no. 4 (1986): 298–300.
- Brounts, Simon. “Siger van Brabant en de wijsgeerige stroomingen aan de Parijssche Universiteit in de XIIIe eeuw.” *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie* VIII (1946): 442–66.
- Brower, J. E., and S. Brower-Toland. “Aquinas on Mental Representation: Concepts and Intentionality.” *Philosophical Review* 117, no. 2 (2008): 193–243.
- Callus, Daniel A. “The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure and of St. Thomas.” *New Blackfriars* 21, no. 240 (1940): 151–64.
- . *The Condemnation of St. Thomas at Oxford*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955.
- Clarke, William Norris. “The Problem of Reality and Multiplicity of Divine Ideas in Christian Neoplatonism.” In *The Creative Retrieval of Saint Thomas Aquinas: Essays in Thomistic Philosophy, New and Old*, edited by William Norris Clarke, 109–27. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009.
- Code, Alan. “The Aporematic Approach to Primary Being in Metaphysics Z,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*. Suppl. 10 (1984): 1–20.
- Crowley, Theodore. “John Peckham, O.F.M. Archbishop of Canterbury, versus the New Aristotelianism.” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 33, no. 2 (1951): 242–55.
- Cullen, Christopher. *Bonaventure*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Dales, Richard. *Medieval Discussions of the Eternity of the World*. Leiden: Brill, 1990.
- . *The Problem of the Rational Soul in the Thirteenth Century*. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- de Boer, Sandra. *The Science of the Soul*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013.

- Doolan, Gregory. *Aquinas Divine Ideas Exemplar Causes*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008.
- Driscoll, J. "Eide in Aristotle's Earlier and Later Theories of Substance." In *Studies in Aristotle*, edited by D.J. O'Meara, 129–59. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1981.
- Edwards, Sandra. "St. Bonaventure on Distinctions." *Franciscan Studies* 38, no. 1 (1978): 194–212.
- Ehrle, Franz. "Beiträge Zur Geschichte der Mittelalterlichen Scholastik 11, Der Augustinismus und der Aristotelismus in der Scholastik gegen Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts." *Archiv für Literatur und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* 5 (1889): 603–35.
- Fabro, Cornelio. *La Nozione Metafisica Di Partecipazione Secondo S. Tommaso D'Aquino*. Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1950.
- . *Participation et Causalité Selon S. Thomas D'Aquin*. Paris: Editions Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1961.
- . "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation." Translated by B. M. Bonansea. *The Review of Metaphysics* 27, no. 3 (1974): 449–491.
- Finamore, John. "Plotinus and Iamblichus on Magic and Theurgy." *Dionysius* 17 (1999): 83–99.
- Finamore, John, and Emilie Kutash. "Proclus on Psyche." In *All from One: A Guide to Proclus*, edited by Pieter D'Hoine and Martjin Marije, 122–138. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Fine, Gail. "Plato and Aristotle on Form and Substance." *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society* 29 (1983): 23–47.
- Geiger, Louis-Bertrand. *La participation dans la philosophie de S. Thomas d'Aquin*. Paris: Vrin, 1942.
- Gerson, Lloyd P. *Plotinus*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.
- . "Proclus and the Third Man." *Études Platoniciennes* 9, no. 8 (2011): 105–18.
- Gilson, Étienne. *La Philosophie de Saint Bonaventure*. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1924.
- . "Les sources gréco-arabes de l'augustinisme avicennisant." *Archive d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen Age* 4 (1929–30), 5–149.
- . "Siger de Brabant d'après Ses Oeuvres Inédites." *Bulletin Thomiste* VI (1940): 5–22.
- . *Being and Some Philosophers*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952.
- . *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again: A Journey in Final Causality, Species, and Evolution*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.
- . *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994.

- Glorieux, Palémon. *Repertoire des maitres en theologie de Paris*. Paris. Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1933.
- Golizin, Alexander. *Et Introibo Ad Altare Dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to Its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition*. Tessonica: Patriarchikon Idryma Paterikon Meleton, 1994.
- Gracia, Jorge. *Introduction to the Problem of Individuation in the Early Middle Ages*. Munich: Philosophia-Verlag, 1988.
- Heineman, Robert. "Aristotle and the Mind-Body Problem." *Phronesis* 35, no. 1 (1990): 83–102.
- Helmig, Christoph, and Antonio L.C. Vargas. "Ascent of the Soul and Grades of Freedom: Neoplatonic Theurgy Between Ritual and Philosophy." In *Fate, Providence and Moral Responsibility in Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Thought: Studies in Honour of Carlos Steel*, edited by Pieter D'Hoine and Gerd Van Riel, 253–266. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014.
- Hochschild, Joshua P. "Porphyry, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas: A Neoplatonic Hierarchy of Virtues and Two Christian Appropriations." In *Medieval Philosophy and the Classical Tradition in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity*, edited by John Inglis, 206–219. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Inglis, John. *Spheres of Philosophical Inquiry and the Historiography of Medieval Philosophy*. Leiden: Brill, 1998.
- Jaeger, Werner. *Aristoteles: Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1923.
- Johnson, Junius. "The One and the Many in Bonaventure's Exemplarity Explained." *Religions* 7, no. 12 (2016): 144.
- King, Peter. "Duns Scotus on the Common Nature and the Individual Differentia." *Philosophical Topics* 20, no. 2 (1992): 51–76.
- . "Bonaventure's Theory of Individuation." In *Individuation in Scholasticism*, edited by Jorge J.E. Garcia, 141–172. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.
- . "The Metaphysics of Abelard." In *The Cambridge Companion to Peter Abelard*, edited by Jefferey E. Brower and Kevin Guilfooy, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 65–125.
- Knowles, M. D. "Some Aspects of the Career of Archbishop Peckham." *The English Historical Review* LVII (1942): 1–18.
- Kovach, Francis J. "The Question of the Eternity of the World in St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas." *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 5, no. 2 (1974): 141–72.
- Leftow, Brian. "Aquinas on Attributes." *Medieval Philosophy & Theology* 11, no. 1 (2003): 1–41.
- Loux, Michael. "Form, Species, and Predication in Metaphysics Z, H, and  $\Theta$ ." *Mind* 88 (1979): 1–23.

- Mandonnet, Pierre. *Siger de Brabant et l'Averroïsme latin au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Louvain: Institut supérieur de philosophie de l'université, 1908–11.
- Marchesi, Angelo. 1976. "L'atteggiamento di S. Bonaventura di Fronte al Pensiero di Aristotele." In *Atti Del Congresso Internazionale per Il VII Centenario Di San Bonaventura Da Bagnoregio: San Bonaventura, Maestro Di Vita Francescana e Di Sapienza Cristiana: Roma, 19-26 Settembre 1974*, edited by Alfonso Pompei, 843–859. Roma: Pontificia Facoltà Teologica San Bonaventura, 1976.
- Marion, Jean-Luc. *God without Being*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991.
- Maritain, Jacques. "Vers une idée thomiste de l'évolution." In *Approches sans Entraves*, edited by Jacques Maritain, 106–162. Paris: Fayard, 1973.
- Maurer, Armand. "Darwin, Thomists, and Secondary Causality." *The Review of Metaphysics* 57, no. 3 (2004): 491–514.
- Mesquita, António Pedro, Simon Noriega-Olmos and Christopher John Ignatius Shields, eds. *Revisiting Aristotle's Fragments: New Essays on the Fragments of Aristotle's Lost Works*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020.
- Meyendorff, John. *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*. Washington and Cleveland: Corpus Books, 1969.
- Miller, Fred D. "Aristotle on the Separability of Mind." In *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*, edited by Christopher Shields, 306–339. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Noone, Timothy. "Universals and Individuation." In *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, edited by Thomas Williams, 100–128. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- O'Leary, Conrad John. *The Substantial Composition of Man According to Saint Bonaventure*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1931.
- O'Meara, Dominic. "Remarks on Dualism and the Definition of Soul in Aristotle's De Anima." *Museum Helveticum* 44, no. 3 (1987): 168–174.
- Opsomer, Jan. "Proclus vs Plotinus on Matter." *Phronesis* 46, no. 2 (2001): 154–188.
- . "Was sind irrationale Seelen?" In *Proklos – Methode, Seelenlehre, Metaphysik: Akten Der Konferenz in Jena am 18. – 20. September 2003*, edited by Matthias Perkams and Rosa Maria Piccione, 136–166. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- O'Rourke, Fran. "Aristotle and the Metaphysics of Evolution." *The Review of Metaphysics* 58 no. 1 (2004): 3–59.
- Osborne, Thomas. "Unibilitas: The Key to Bonaventure's Understanding of Human Nature," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 37, no. 2 (April 1999): 227–250.
- Owen, G.E.L. "The Platonism of Aristotle." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 51 (1965): 136–137.
- . "Particular and General." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1978–79): 1–21.
- Pasnau, Robert. "Form and Matter." In *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, edited by Christina Van Dyke, 635–646. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

- Perl, Eric D. *Theophany: The Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- Pfeiffer, Christian. *Aristotle's Theory of Body*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Quinn, John F. *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure's Philosophy*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973.
- . "St. Bonaventure and Arabian Interpretations of Two Aristotelean Problems." *Franciscan Studies* 37, no. 1 (1977): 219–28.
- Reynolds, Philip L. "Bonaventure's Theory of Resemblance." *Traditio* 58, no. 1 (2003): 219–55.
- Rist, John M. *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.
- Robert, Patrick. "St. Bonaventure, Defender of Christian Wisdom," *Franciscan Studies* III (March 1943): 159–179.
- Roch, Robert. "The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure – A Controversy." *Franciscan Studies* 19 (1959): 209–226.
- Roem, Paul. *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Schumacher, Lydia. "Christian Platonism in the Medieval West." In *Christian Platonism*, 183–206. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.
- Sheppard, Anne. "Proclus' Attitude to Theurgy." *The Classical Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (1982): 211–24.
- Steel, Carlos G. *The Changing Self. A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus*. Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1978.
- . "Proclus on the Mirror as a Metaphor of Participation." In *Miroir et Savoir: La transmission d'un thème platonicien, des Alexandrins à la philosophie arabo-musulmane: actes du colloque international tenu à Leuven et Louvain-la-Neuve, Les 17 et 18 Novembre 2005*, edited by Daniel De Smet, M. Sebti, and G. De Callatäy, 79–96. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2008.
- Sykes, R.D. "Form in Aristotle: Universal or Particular." *Philosophy* 50, no. 193 (1975): 311–331.
- Twetten, David, Steven Baldner, and Steven C. Snyder. "Albert's Physics." In *A Companion to Albert the Great: Theology, Philosophy and the Sciences*, edited by Irven Michael Resnick, 179–219. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- van Buren, Franziska. "Bonaventure, Aristotle, and the Being of Universal Forms." *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy* 9 (2021): 187–221.
- . "Circular Motion and Circular Thought: A Synthetic Approach to the Fifth Nature in Aristotle's *De Caelo* and *De Philosophia*." *Apeiron* 56, no. 1 (2023): 15–42.
- . *An Introduction to the Metaphysical Thought of John Peckham: Texts and Translations of the Summa de Esse et Essentia and Selected Quodlibetal Questions with Commentary*. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2023.

- van den Berg, R.M. *Proclus' Hymns: Essays, Translations, Commentary*. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- van Steenberghe, Fernand. *Siger de Brabant d'après ses oeuvres inédites.1 Les oeuvres inédites*. Louvain: Louvain Éd. De L'inst. Supérieur De Philosophie, 1931.
- . *The Philosophical Movement in the Thirteenth Century*. London: Nelson, 1956.
- . "Prolégomènes à La Quarta Via." *Rivista Di Filosofia Neo-Scholastica* 70 (1978): 99–112.
- . "Le Mythe d'un Monde Éternel." *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 76, no. 30 (1982): 157–79.
- Veuthey, Léon. "Les divers courants de la philosophie augustin-franciscaine au moyen âge." In *Scholastica ratione historico-critica instauranda*, Acta Congressus Scholastici Internationalis Rome (Rome, 1951), 627–52.
- Whiting, Jennifer. "Form and Individuation in Aristotle." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1986): 359–377.
- Wippel, John F. *Thomas Aquinas on the Divine Ideas*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1993.
- . *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000.
- Witt, Charlotte. *Aristotle on Substance*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Woods, Michael. "Form, Species, and Predication in Aristotle." *Synthese* 96, no. 3 (1993): 399–415.
- Zimmerman, Albert. "Alberts Kritik an einem Argument für den Anfang der Welt." In *Albert der Grosse, Seine Zeit, Sein Werk, Seine Wirkung*, edited by Albert Zimmerman, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1981: 77–88.

## INDEX

- accident, see “form, accidental”  
act (*actus*), 53-5, 61, 88, 96, 101, 103, 106,  
134  
actuality (*actualitas*), 43, 67, 106, 111,  
126, 134  
Adam and Eve, 81, 109-10, 139 n451, 140  
Albert the Great, 1, 4, 9-10, 51, 82, 84  
n256, 85 n260  
Alexander of Hales, 98 n306, 122, 193  
angles, 53-4, 56 n157, 81, 96-102, 106, 186  
Aquasparta, Matthew, 194  
Aquinas, Thomas  
eternity of the world, 74  
exemplar causality, 52, 67-8, 70-1  
fourth way, 52, 64-7, 105  
participation, 4, 52, 57-67, 71-2, 103-4  
*per essentiam*, 57-9, 104  
*per participationem*, 57-9, 104  
Aristotle  
act (*energeia*), 152-3  
actuality (*entelecheia*), 43, 103  
desire (*orexis*), 152-3  
eternity of the world, 76, 81-8, 194  
fifth element, 45  
light, 168, 172  
soul-body dualism, 39-42, 48-9  
sun and moon argument, 100 n314,  
129 n422, 160-2  
will (*bouletos*), 153-4  
Aristotle, works of  
*Categories*, 38-9, 43, 114-5, 129, 159,  
175, 185 n592  
*De Anima*, 40-1, 43, 45, 79-80, 86,  
103, 112, 117 n387, 168 n538, 172  
n550  
*De Caelo*, 9, 74, 80-1, 85, 88, 90, 99,  
129, 161 n507, 162  
*De Interpretatione*, 113, 114 n372  
*De Philosophia*, 41 n112  
*Eudemus*, 41, 45  
*Metaphysics*, 23 n41, 52, 55, 65 n188,  
79-81, 85-6, 88, 90 n282, 91, 100  
n314, 103, 108 n351, 141 n457, 143  
n464, 152 n488, 153-4, 161-2, 185  
n590, 186  
*Physics*, 79-80, 83 n264, 83 n266, 85-  
6, 104 n333, 108 n351, 112, 117 n391,  
127 n418, 148 n464, 176 n561, 183  
*Poetics*, 6, 81, 187  
*Posterior Analytics*, 65 n188, 85, 99,  
100 n312, 113, 115, 117 n387, 129,  
140 n454, 157, 183 n582  
*Topics*, 80-1  
Augustine, 6, 10-1, 28-32, 36-7, 51, 61  
n176, 68, 71, 76-7, 80-1, 83, 93, 96,  
103, 108-9, 127 n418, 129 n424, 133,  
139, 159, 178-9, 184, 186 n594-5, 188-  
91, 193-5  
Averroes, 1, 11, 159  
Avicenna, 1, 3, 11, 36-9, 41-3, 45-9, 117,  
121 n403  
Avicennizing-Augustinianism, 37  
*bene esse*, 102-6, 185-7  
body-soul dualism, 37, 39-45, 48-9  
Boehner, Philotheus, 77, 83, 122, 171,  
173-4  
*bonitas*, 102-6  
Bougerol, J. Guy, 77-81, 83



- Cicero, Marcus Tullius, 90 n284
- complete/incomplete (form, substance, being), 16, 20-3, 102, 108, 110, 112  
n363, 114, 115 n379, 117-9, 121, 125-8, 130, 162, 177
- contraction, 164
- creatio ex nihilo*, 82, 84, 88, 90-1
- definition, 1, 5, 82, 115, 122, 158, 161-3, 167, 169 n541, 172, 175, 182-3, 191
- defluxus*, 168, 172 n550
- desire, 136, 142 n458, 144, 152-4, 186 n597 (Pseudo-)Dionysius the Areopagite, 3, 15, 19 n25, 24, 31-6, 63, 65, 68-70, 89, 96, 130, 133-4, 136-9, 144, 148-9, 152, 154, 158, 183, 187 n601, 188, 191, 194-5
- divine ideas, 10-1, 67-71, 133, 137, 148, 154
- Duns Scotus, 1, 5, 7, 43-4, 47, 56, 99  
n311, 122 n405, 159, 162, 191
- eclectic Aristotelianism, 193
- end, 16, 23, 102-3, 136, 143-4, 178, 185-6
- energeia*, see "Aristotle, act"
- entelecheia*, see "Aristotle, actuality"
- esse/existere*, 7, 101-2, 120, 122-5, 133, 165, 180
- essence, see "indifference of essence" and "*per essentiam*"
- eternity of the world, 9-11, 74, 76, 81-5, 87-8, 90, 92, 194
- evil, 6, 81, 89, 158, 183-91, 194-6
- evolution of species, 6, 158, 180-1, 191
- exemplar cause/causality, 4, 6, 11, 52, 67-8, 70-1, 76, 81-2, 92-3, 133, 137-8, 140-55, 180, 194-5
- Fabro, Cornelio, 58, 60-3, 65
- form  
accidental, 6, 38, 105, 158, 166, 167, 169-75  
as principle of individuation, 157-65  
individual (*forma individualis*), 5, 7, 44, 47, 56-7, 100, 111, 116, 128, 157, 160-4, 196  
of corporeity, 37, 39, 41-3, 49, 158, 169-74, 191  
of the part (*partis*), 124-5, 128  
of the whole (*totius*), 102 n325, 118, 124-5, 128  
plurality of (substantial), 5-6, 37-9, 43, 48, 75, 157-8, 165-6, 169, 174-5, 191  
substantial, see "form, plurality of (substantial)"  
universal, 1, 3-6, 8, 10-2, 15-6, 43-4, 46-9, 52, 56-8, 78, 96-7, 99-102, 104, 108-30, 137, 140-3, 150, 157-64, 176-7, 180-3, 191, 194, 196
- formal distinction, 7, 122, 126, 151
- Geiger, Louis-Bertrand, 61-5
- Gilson, Etienne, 27-8, 37, 68, 75-7, 83, 93, 165, 171, 180-1, 193
- God  
as artisan, 55, 67-8, 145-8  
as Being, 24, 27, 30-3, 72, 135, 143, 146  
as Beyond-Being, 6, 15, 24-5, 27-8, 31-3, 71, 133, 136  
as the Good, 15, 25-7, 31-6, 103, 105, 136, 142, 144, 146, 153, 187  
ideas in, see "divine ideas"
- haecceity, 160 n504, 163
- horse  
Alejandro, 123, 160, 165  
Rye, 1, 99, 123, 160, 165, 167  
Spirit, 123
- idolatry, 188-90
- illumination, 12-3, 37, 168, 195
- indifference of essence, 37, 45, 49

- individuation, 5, 99, 125 n414, 126 n417,  
157-60, 162-6, 175 n556, 191
- Liber de Causis*, 3, 15-6, 65, 88, 92
- lux*, 159, 167-75
- matter  
as cause of individuation, 157-60  
spiritual, 37, 44-5, 49, 96-7, 100-2,  
127 n418, 159 n495, 174 n555
- metaphysics of light, 158
- Ockham, William of, 1-2, 5, 38 n113, 52,  
56, 112 n365, 116, 118 n392, 119, 126  
n417, 127-8, 131, 151, 153, 163-4, 191,  
195-6
- Parmenides of Elea, 1, 13, 26
- Peckham, John, 8 n4, 10, 37, 39, 42, 73-4,  
98 n306, 113 n368, 164, 175 n556, 194
- per essentiam*, 57-9, 104-5, 187
- per participationem*, 57-9, 104
- Plato, 1, 6, 10-1, 13, 15, 17, 24-7, 61 n175,  
84 n257, 88-9, 90 n284, 91-5, 107  
n348, 111, 119, 130
- Plato, works of  
*Parmenides*, 1, 18, 47, 116 n381  
*Republic*, 26
- Plotinus, 15, 17, 24-7, 32, 76 n227, 94, 152
- predication, 1, 5, 20, 38, 58, 60, 112-3,  
115-6, 118, 167, 169 n541, 172, 175-6, 185
- principle of individuation, see  
"individuation"
- problem of universals, 1, 5-6, 56
- Proclus, 3, 5, 15-24, 28, 33, 88 n275, 95,  
108, 110 n357, 119, 120-1, 126-7, 130,  
133, 136 n440, 155, 159, 164 n526
- Proclus, works of  
*Elements of Theology*, 16-23, 88 n275
- Quinn, John Francis, 38, 75, 77, 83, 157,  
165-70, 173, 193
- quo/quod est* distinction, 37, 98-9, 122
- reasons (*rationes*)  
causal (*causales*), 139-44  
primordial (*primordiales*), 144  
seminal (*seminales*), 16, 81, 107 n347,  
108-15, 117, 119-22, 124-6, 129, 140-  
3, 151, 155, 162-4, 176-80
- Rochelle (Rupella), John de la, 39, 41,  
43, 48, 193
- rule (*regula*), 109, 140-2, 144
- similitude, 16, 33, 61-3, 71, 117, 139, 145,  
149, 159-60
- soul, 29, 37, 39-45, 49, 54 n148, 85-6,  
100-3, 116, 124, 137, 153, 166, 174 n555,  
183-5, 187
- St. Victor, Richard of, 188-9
- Suarez, Francisco, 38 n113, 126 n417,  
180 n577
- telos*, 16, 23, 103
- universal hylomorphism, 42, 44, 96-7
- universals, see "form, universal"
- van Steenberghen, Fernand, 9-10, 65,  
76-9, 94, 193
- Victorinus, Marius, 15, 30-2, 36
- will (*voluntas*), 152-4, 176, 186 n597

